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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

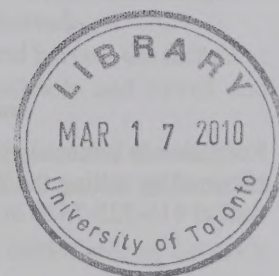
Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 8 March 2010

Lundi 8 mars 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 8 March 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 8 mars 2010

The first day of the second session of the 39th Parliament of the province of Ontario commenced at 1400 pursuant to a proclamation of the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of the province.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to open the session by reading the speech from the throne.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Hon. David C. Onley (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated.

Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, people of Ontario.

Since the global recession struck, things have been difficult for many Ontario families.

In the manufacturing sector, the last two years have been particularly hard.

Beaucoup d'entre nous connaissent quelqu'un qui a perdu son emploi.

Nos propres familles ont peut-être même été touchées.

Certains disent que le pire est passé et que la récession tire à sa fin.

Pourtant, ses effets néfastes persistent.

Many of us know someone who has lost a job.

Perhaps even in our own families.

Some say the worst has passed and the recession is ending.

Yet the damage remains.

Companies have downsized, some have moved, some have closed their doors for good—not just here in Ontario, but in neighbouring states and provinces, and places all around the world.

No place has escaped the great recession unscathed.

That is why your government is responding to the extraordinary challenge of the global recession with two extraordinary measures.

First: It plans to invest over \$32 billion in roads, bridges, public transit and energy retrofits for our schools.

This is creating and sustaining over 300,000 jobs and puts money into the hands of families, where it is needed—and it is stimulating our economy while we emerge from the recession.

Second: Your government is supporting Ontarians in their choice to go back to school so they can get a good job—not just any job.

Ontario's Second Career program is a first for Canada because it supports up to two years of long-term training.

For people like Jason Boylan—one of the first participants in the program—Second Career has made a real, positive difference.

When he was laid off from an auto parts manufacturing job, he enrolled in culinary management at Fleming College.

Jason graduates in a few weeks and has several good job offers on the table.

Your government congratulates him—and over 26,000 other Ontarians who have entered the program.

Venir en aide aux gens et aux collectivités touchés par la récession est une responsabilité importante que votre gouvernement prend très au sérieux.

Cela permet aussi de jeter de nouvelles bases pour la croissance future.

Parce que, même en période difficile, l'Ontario a toujours eu le regard tourné vers l'avenir.

Là où d'autres voient un monde menaçant, les Ontariennes et Ontariens voient un défi à relever.

Helping people and communities hurt by the recession is an important responsibility your government takes seriously.

But it is also laying a new foundation for growth.

Because—even in tough times—Ontarians have always looked to their future.

Where others see a world that threatens, Ontarians see opportunity that beckons.

We carved our province out of a harsh northern land.

Our people endured, and they thrived.

They began to mine the land, and harvest the forests.

Our people built farms and schools and towns and cities.

We gave the world great artists, poets and novelists.

We invented medicines that have saved millions of lives.

We laid down our lives on the battlefields of history's bloodiest wars.

We built the cars, trains and planes that moved the world into the 20th century.

We built an economy supporting a quality of life for our families that is the envy of the world.

And as we begin the second decade of the 21st century—as our world faces unprecedented economic, environmental and social challenges—one thing remains clear.

The world needs Ontario.

The world needs what we have to offer.

It needs our schools—to educate the best and brightest citizens of the world who will go on to solve the problems of our world.

It needs our innovators—who have invented tools such as the BlackBerry that keep our world connected.

It needs our skilled workers—who continue to build the advanced products the world needs.

Le monde a besoin de notre diversité parce que nulle part ailleurs voit-on autant de gens venus d'autant de pays vivre en si grande harmonie.

Il a besoin de notre compassion, non seulement parce que nous nous entraisons grâce à notre système de santé et à nos services publics, mais parce que les Ontariennes et Ontariens ouvrent leur cœur lorsque le désastre frappe, comme en Haïti et au Chili.

Et lorsque le devoir appelle, comme il l'a fait en Afghanistan, nos compatriotes sont là. Et lorsqu'ils rentrent à la maison, nous leur rendons hommage.

It needs our diversity—because nowhere else do more people come together from more places to live so well, together.

It needs our compassion—because not only do we lift one another up through our health care system and our public services, but when disaster strikes, as it did in Haiti and Chile, Ontarians open their hearts to the world.

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And when duty calls—as it has in Afghanistan—our people are there to serve. And when our people return from service, we honour them.

Ontarians have always been citizens of Canada and citizens of the world.

At the start of the 20th century, Ontario was there for the transition from buggy whip to the automobile, helping our country compete and our world move faster.

At the start of the 21st century, Ontario will be there for the transition to a new, clean economy, to help our nation and our world move more efficiently.

We will continue to build the world's cars—and they will be the more efficient cars the world needs.

We will continue to have a strong manufacturing sector—but increasingly, it will be advanced manufacturing that builds on the skills and education of our people.

Yes, our world has changed.

But one thing remains.

Our world needs Ontario—more than ever.

The world presents us with more opportunity than ever.

And we need to be ready.

Les cinq prochaines années seront décisives pour l'Ontario.

Voilà pourquoi votre gouvernement lance le nouveau plan quinquennal Ontario ouvert sur le monde.

Pour développer son économie et renforcer ses assises, l'Ontario doit être ouvert au changement, aux possibilités et au nouveau monde qui l'entoure.

The next five years will be decisive for Ontario.

That's why your government is launching a new, five-year Open Ontario plan.

Because growing our economy, and growing stronger, requires that Ontario be open to change, open to opportunities, open to our new world.

The Open Ontario plan will create an Ontario even more open to new ideas, new people, new investment—not only to replace old jobs that have gone—but to create the new jobs that are coming.

Not only to build the things that made us great in the last century—but to build the things that will make us great in this one.

Your government is launching that plan today.

The Open Ontario plan begins with creating a climate where business can thrive, create jobs and build innovative new products to sell to the world.

Creating that climate has begun through a package of tax reforms that modernize our tax system to make us more competitive and create more jobs.

Income taxes for Ontarians were cut on January 1.

Your government is also cutting corporate income taxes and eliminating the capital tax this year.

And in lockstep with the federal government, Ontario is introducing a harmonized sales tax.

Independent economists say these changes will create nearly 600,000 more Ontario jobs over the next 10 years—including over 100,000 in manufacturing alone.

So these improvements to the tax system benefit all Ontarians.

Ainsi, les entreprises ontariennes, des usines de fabrication aux petites entreprises, auront plus d'argent à investir dans leur avenir. Elles auront aussi plus de temps et de ressources à consacrer à leurs activités plutôt qu'aux formalités administratives.

Cela leur permettra de conserver leurs employés ou d'en embaucher d'autres, et de créer une main-d'œuvre de stature mondiale.

They mean that Ontario businesses—from factories to small businesses—will have more money to invest in their future. And more time and resources to focus on their business instead of dealing with red tape.

This will allow them to keep or hire more people and create a workforce that can take on the world.

Another part of your government's Open Ontario plan that is already under way is the Green Energy Act.

It provides a stable price for clean energy producers so that they will invest here, and create up to 50,000 Ontario jobs in new, clean industries that did not exist a few years ago.

It is already paying dividends.

In January, Samsung announced the biggest investment of its kind in the world: \$7 billion to create 2,500 megawatts of clean power and some 16,000 Ontario jobs.

Your government will soon welcome hundreds of new, clean energy investments in Ontario through its feed-in tariff program—which is attracting the interest of the world's investors and entrepreneurs.

Those projects will need solar panels and wind turbines.

Ontarians will build them.

And we will sell them all over North America.

Your government is also doing its part to streamline services for business through its Open for Business strategy.

Those are just some of the steps your government is taking to create an Ontario that is more open to new investment, new Ontario jobs, and new industries.

Today, it takes another step.

Dans le cadre de notre plan Ontario ouvert sur le monde, nous déposerons un projet de loi misant sur le savoir-faire de la province dans les technologies du secteur de l'eau propre.

La loi sur le développement des technologies de l'eau entraînerait la création de nouveaux emplois en Ontario et ferait de notre province le chef de file nord-américain en matière de développement et de vente de nouvelles technologies et de nouveaux services pour la conservation et le traitement de l'eau.

As part of its Open Ontario plan, your government will introduce legislation that will build on Ontario's expertise in clean water technology.

The Water Opportunities Act would lay the foundation for new Ontario jobs and make our province the North American leader in the development and sale of new technologies and services for water conservation and treatment.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates the global market for water technology at more than US\$400 billion per year—and doubling every five to six years.

In the next 20 years, worldwide demand for water is expected to be 40% greater than current supply—a crisis in the making if the world does not act.

Already, Ontario is beginning to provide solutions.

From water conservation to nanotechnology, Ontario companies are leading the way—and employing 22,000 people in good, high-paying Ontario jobs selling water technology around the world.

Your government will work with our colleges, universities and entrepreneurs to create even more Ontario jobs and attract even more clean water expertise and investment to our province.

It will strengthen protections for our water—including the Great Lakes.

It will build on our strong foundation of water expertise—and make our province the clean water capital of North America.

Your government will also support growth and expansion in our agri-food sector by working through Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to create new opportunities to buy local food, and open up new markets outside the province—because the world needs the good things that grow in Ontario.

Votre gouvernement sait aussi que les habitants du nord de la province font face à des défis particuliers et que la récession mondiale a eu un effet profond sur les localités de cette région.

Il veillera à ce que le nord récolte les fruits du plan Ontario ouvert sur le monde.

Your government also knows that northern Ontarians face particular challenges—and that the global recession has had a deep impact in northern communities.

Your government will ensure the north benefits from its Open Ontario plan.

In 2008, northern Ontario became home to our first diamond mine.

Your government will build on that success—particularly in the region known as the Ring of Fire.

It is said to contain one of the largest chromite deposits in the world—a key ingredient in stainless steel.

There is no substitute for chromite. There is no North American producer of chromite.

It is the most promising mining opportunity in Canada in a century.

Your government is fully committed to working with northerners, aboriginal communities and mining partners to fully realize the Ring of Fire's potential.

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Together, we will create Ontario jobs and support northern families as we continue to protect 50% of the northern boreal forest.

As well, your government will continue to promote economic opportunity and consultation with aboriginal communities as part of an improved and productive relationship that has been forged with aboriginal peoples.

Your government also understands that the bedrock of our province's economy includes one of the strongest financial services industries in the world.

Canada's banks—based here in Ontario—are widely recognized as the soundest in the world.

Toronto is now North America's third largest financial centre and home to 350,000 jobs. Ontario-wide, the sector supports 625,000 jobs.

So your government is working with the Financial Services Leadership Council to support the industry and create a strategy to make Toronto one of the world's elite financial centres.

And your government applauds the federal government's efforts to create a national securities regulator. It should be located in Toronto.

Your government will continue to open up new economic opportunities for all Ontarians through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which will make Ontario accessible by 2025.

Votre gouvernement est reconnaissant du travail des 46 000 organismes sans but lucratif de l'Ontario qui sont les héros méconnus de notre économie.

Près de cinq millions d'Ontariennes et d'Ontariens offrent leurs services dans leur collectivité.

Certains d'entre eux aident votre gouvernement à atteindre son but de réduire le taux de pauvreté de 25 % en cinq ans.

Your government is grateful for the work of Ontario's 46,000 not-for-profit organizations that are the unsung heroes of Ontario's economy.

Nearly five million Ontarians volunteer their services in their communities.

Some are helping your government reach its goal of reducing poverty rates by 25% in five years.

Some are coaching our young people—like Sandy Cooper-Ryder of London. For 30 years she's been in-

spiring young people to reach higher, dig deeper and go further—not just on the track, but in all areas of their lives.

Sandy is one of the many dedicated coaches training Ontario's next generation of gifted young athletes, some of whom will compete in the 2015 Pan American Games.

On this International Women's Day, your government particularly recognizes dedicated women like Sandy—together with all the volunteers who are making a real difference.

Open Ontario will develop new ways to strengthen the not-for-profit sector—recognizing that in a time of more limited resources, we all need to work together to move our province forward.

To ensure that Ontario's resources are always devoted to our highest priorities, your government has initiated a review of its business enterprises.

If the review concludes that change in Ontario's assets is in the public interest, your government will use the proceeds to better support Ontarians' highest priorities in a global economy—including the strongest possible commitment to the skills and education of our people.

Ontario is already home to the builders, dreamers and innovators of the future.

Right now, they are boys and girls sitting in classrooms across our province.

Tomorrow, they will be men and women, ready to take on the world.

That is why your government has made education its highest priority.

It has reduced class sizes, raised test scores, increased the graduation rate, and created thousands of new spaces in colleges, universities and apprenticeships.

Ontarians are some of the most highly skilled and educated workers in the world.

And that gives us a competitive edge.

It is an edge we must sharpen even further.

C'est pourquoi, dès cet automne, des écoles des quatre coins de la province commenceront à offrir un programme d'apprentissage à temps plein pour les enfants de quatre et cinq ans.

C'est la première fois qu'un tel programme est offert en Amérique du Nord.

Il s'inscrit dans le cadre d'un projet visant à aider davantage d'enfants à bien démarrer l'école pour suivre plus tard des études collégiales ou universitaires, ou un programme de formation, et trouver un bon emploi.

That's why, starting this fall, full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds will begin at schools across our province.

This is the first program of its kind in North America.

It's part of a plan to help more children get a strong start in school—so they can go on to college, university or training programs—and find a great job.

It will help lift more children out of poverty.

It will help busy parents balance their work and their family lives.

It will build a stronger economy for Ontario.

Because to put it simply—the places with the strongest schools, today, will have the strongest economies tomorrow.

Ontario has one of the highest rates of post-secondary education in the world at 62%. Since 2003, your government has added 180,000 students to our colleges, universities and apprenticeships.

But we need to reach even higher, knowing that in the new world, 70% of all new jobs will require post-secondary education.

So your government's Open Ontario plan will raise Ontario's post-secondary rate to 70%.

Your government's plan begins with increasing spaces in colleges and universities for 20,000 students this year.

That's the equivalent of a whole new University of Guelph.

Grâce au plan Ontario ouvert sur le monde de votre gouvernement, les collèges et les universités de la province pourront accueillir tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes qualifiés qui souhaitent poursuivre des études.

En ce moment, 120 000 apprentis apprennent un métier en Ontario.

Votre gouvernement a créé récemment l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario afin de moderniser son système d'apprentissage et de formation dans les métiers spécialisés.

Under your government's Open Ontario plan, every qualified Ontarian who wants to go to college or university will find a place.

Right now, 120,000 Ontario apprentices are learning a trade.

Your government recently established an Ontario College of Trades to modernize Ontario's apprenticeship and skilled trades system.

Open Ontario will continue to stand behind the talented and skilled tradespeople who have made our province strong, while enhancing workers' safety.

Your government will work with all its partners in education, training and business to develop a new, five-year plan to improve the quality of Ontario's post-secondary education system.

Your government will create the new Ontario Online Institute, bringing the best professors in the top programs at Ontario universities to the homes of those who want to pursue this new option for higher learning.

Your government's Open Ontario plan will also open our colleges and universities to the world.

Millions of families around the globe want what Ontarians have—a quality post-secondary education that leads to a good job and a secure future.

The world needs Ontario's schools.

So your government will aggressively promote Ontario post-secondary institutions abroad, and increase international enrolment by 50% while maintaining spaces for Ontario students.

Their contributions will strengthen our schools and create more Ontario jobs.

Together, we will make Ontario a classroom for the world.

In Ontario, we care for our people.

In Ontario, no one who gets sick is turned away.

In Ontario, quality health care is one more thing families don't have to worry about, and one more advantage we have over the competition.

Your government has strengthened that advantage.

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Au cours des six dernières années, 900 000 Ontariennes et Ontariens de plus ont eu accès à un médecin de famille.

Davantage de médecins étrangers ont obtenu l'autorisation d'exercer en Ontario.

Les premières cliniques d'Amérique du Nord dirigées par du personnel infirmier praticien ouvrent leurs portes.

Parce que les Ontariennes et Ontariens veulent s'entraider et prendre soin les uns des autres, nous avons pu réduire les temps d'attente pour les chirurgies du cancer.

In the last six years, 900,000 more Ontarians got access to a family doctor.

More international doctors got their licence to practise here.

The first nurse practitioner-led clinics in North America are opening their doors.

Because Ontarians believe in lifting one another up, and caring for one another—we have shorter wait times for cancer surgeries.

We have faster care at emergency rooms and improved and expanded hospitals.

Your government has acted because Ontarians demand, expect and deserve public health care that is second to none.

Your government remains focused on reducing emergency wait times, and achieving results in diabetes and e-health in communities across Ontario.

In the past, the question facing Ontarians was: "Will health care be there for me and my children?"

Ontarians have answered that question with a resounding yes.

Together, we are absolutely committed to a strong public health care system.

But today we face new challenges that require a new plan.

Just 20 years ago, 32 cents of every dollar spent on government programs were spent on health care.

Today, it is 46 cents.

In 12 years, it could be 70 cents.

C'est pourquoi les Ontariennes et Ontariens se posent maintenant la question suivante : « Comment pouvons-nous continuer de financer un système de santé de premier ordre sans écarter toutes les autres priorités qui nous tiennent à cœur, comme investir dans les écoles, aider les plus vulnérables, protéger l'environnement et financer l'infrastructure et le développement économique? ».

C'est une question à laquelle il faudra répondre tôt ou tard dans chaque province et territoire du Canada.

Votre gouvernement est d'avis que l'Ontario doit guider la discussion à l'échelle nationale et invitera la

population ontarienne à participer directement à cet important débat.

So, the question now facing Ontarians is: "How do we fund the best health care without crowding out all the other priorities we share—like investing in our schools, helping our vulnerable, protecting our environment, and investing in infrastructure and economic development?"

That is a discussion that will happen, sooner or later, in every Canadian province and territory.

Your government believes Ontario needs to lead that national dialogue, and will engage Ontarians directly in this important conversation.

Ontario will lead by pursuing a path of constant reform to ensure that the health system—and all our vital public services—are there for our children and grandchildren.

Your government will begin this process by keeping drugs affordable to keep Ontarians healthy, and reinvest the savings in health care.

It will introduce legislation to make health care providers and executives accountable for improving patient care.

Your government will build on the success of the wait time reduction strategy by ensuring that—for more and more services—money will follow the patient. Patients will have greater choice about where they can access the best quality treatment.

Your government will create an independent, expert advisory body to provide recommendations on clinical practice guidelines. It will ensure that future investments get results and improve patient health.

Votre gouvernement examinera la Loi sur les hôpitaux publics et présentera un projet de loi dans le but de créer un système hospitalier qui aura recours au savoir-faire des partenaires de la collectivité et de tous les professionnels de la santé.

Afin que nos services de santé répondent aux besoins de tous les citoyens, la communauté francophone participera davantage à la planification des services de santé en français à l'échelon local.

Your government will review the Public Hospitals Act and introduce legislation to create a hospital system that taps into the expertise of community partners and all health care professionals.

To ensure our health services are meeting the needs of all citizens, Ontario's francophone community will have better input into the planning of French-language health services in their communities.

Your government will work with the public and private sectors to develop a strategy to promote better health for our children.

Ontario's health system not only provides world-class care for patients—but develops leading-edge treatments and research. Open Ontario will export that expertise to the world while providing quality care at home.

Your government knows that if our province wants to maintain strong public services and attract investment, the world needs Ontario to be on a solid financial footing.

That's why, in its next budget, your government will lay out a plan to return the budget to balance.

Your government will not put economic growth at risk by cutting too much, too soon.

Nor will it proceed with spending as if there is no deficit.

So it will continue to make responsible choices, and it is proceeding with its plan to reduce its own size by 5%.

Votre gouvernement sait que les Ontariennes et Ontariens sont de fiers Canadiens.

Nous sommes fiers de travailler fort et de faire notre part pour renforcer notre pays.

Votre gouvernement a collaboré avec le gouvernement fédéral afin d'assurer que tous les Canadiens et Canadiennes sont traités équitablement.

Il entend poursuivre cette relation positive et productive.

Les Ontariennes et Ontariens accueillent favorablement l'engagement du gouvernement fédéral de ne pas réduire les paiements de transfert à la province pendant qu'il rétablit l'équilibre budgétaire.

Votre gouvernement demande au gouvernement fédéral de respecter ses obligations dans les domaines où il n'en fait pas assez, comme les services de garde et l'immigration.

Your government knows that Ontarians are proud Canadians.

We are proud to work hard and do our part to strengthen our country.

Your government has worked with the federal government to ensure that all Canadians receive fair treatment.

And your government wants to continue that positive and productive relationship.

Ontarians welcome the federal government's commitment to not reduce transfer payments to Ontario as it balances the federal budget.

Your government calls on the federal government to live up to its obligations in areas where it has come up short, such as child care and immigration.

Your government also calls on its federal partner to show leadership on climate change, to help our businesses get ahead of the changes that are coming to the North American market and help create jobs for Ontarians.

Our people are active participants in the fight against climate change.

We are closing down our coal plants and building a cleaner economy.

We are already building the clean technologies the rest of the world needs.

Your government asks that our partner in Ottawa recognize and fund Ontario's green revolution—which is already under way—just as it is funding carbon-sequestration research in other provinces.

Il ne fait aucun doute que le monde a changé.

Les défis auxquels font face les Ontariennes et Ontariens dans ce nouveau monde sont sans précédent.

Pourtant, les familles ontariennes ont le droit d'espérer en l'avenir, car le monde a besoin de l'Ontario.

Without a doubt, our world has changed.

The challenges facing Ontarians in that new world are unprecedented.

But Ontario families have every right to be hopeful about their future.

Because our world needs Ontario.

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It needs our people to rise to the challenges of our time—just as past generations rose to the challenges of their time.

The world needs Ontario to lead the way—not only to provide the goods and services the global economy demands, but to provide the example of a good, strong, compassionate society that our world needs.

Here in Ontario, we have built a modern miracle.

A society where our children get a great education.

Where our sick and seniors are cared for.

Where our people speak every language, practise every religion, and come from every place on earth to live together in peace and prosperity.

Where immigration isn't just a word, but our lifeblood.

Our world needs Ontario to succeed.

And we will, just as we always have.

It begins with a new, five-year plan for a more Open Ontario.

Because we know that when we invest in each other's health care and education, we are investing in our shared future.

We know that the new, clean-technology products and services we will develop and sell will not only create good, Ontario jobs for our families, but a cleaner and better planet for all.

That's the goal of Open Ontario.

Because right now, in an Ontario classroom, there is a young person who will be our next Banting or Bondar.

A young person who will improve lives—or save them—all around the world.

Le monde a besoin que cette jeune personne réussisse.

Nous devons tous faire notre part pour que cet enfant, tous les enfants, aient la possibilité de réussir.

Pour que nous puissions continuer de créer ce dont le monde a besoin.

Pour que nous puissions continuer d'édifier une société bonne et généreuse.

The world needs that young Ontarian to succeed.

And Ontarians need to ensure that child—and every child—has every opportunity to succeed.

So we can keep building what the world needs.

So we can keep building a good and compassionate society.

Together, let us seize the opportunities that await all of us in a new world that beckons us.

For our families.

For our children.

For our Ontario.

The greatest province in the best country in the world.

Singing of O Canada.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that to prevent mistakes, I have obtained a copy of the speech from the throne, which I will now read.

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AN ACT TO PERPETUATE AN ANCIENT PARLIAMENTARY RIGHT LOI VISANT À PERPETUER UN ANCIEN DROIT PARLEMENTAIRE

Mr. McGuinty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 1, An Act to perpetuate an ancient parliamentary right / Projet de loi 1, Loi visant à perpétuer un ancien droit parlementaire.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Premier for a short statement.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, as you are very much aware, it is a long-standing tradition that the first bill introduced in the Legislature represent an initiative not mentioned in the speech from the throne. The introduction of this legislation signifies the assembly's independence from the crown and the collective right of all members to address the Legislature's priorities. I'm pleased to introduce this bill.

MOTIONS

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration on Tuesday, March 9, 2010.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move the adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. Tuesday, March 9, 2010.

The House adjourned at 1450.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 9 March 2010

Mardi 9 mars 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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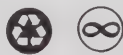
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 March 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 mars 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Jewish prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Consideration of the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I move, seconded by Ms. Van Bommel, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

I will be sharing my time this morning with Ms. Van Bommel from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Yesterday, we were honoured to—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Mr. Johnson has moved, seconded by Ms. Van Bommel, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session."

You may continue.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Yesterday, we had the honour of hearing our government's plan on moving forward. It was called Open Ontario, and I believe the most important thing that our speech brought forward was a message of hope for Ontario.

I would like to quote our Premier from a recent speech. He said, "Some see a new world that threatens us. I see a bright future that beckons us."

We know we are coming out of the greatest recession since the 1930s. It has impacted every country, every province, every community in Ontario. It has affected my

friends, neighbours and family. We have all been impacted.

The manufacturing sector in Ontario has been forever changed. Anyone who believes that it will return is sadly mistaken and living in a dream world. Families in Ontario want and deserve low prices for goods, but it's hard to compete with countries that have a lower standard of living, pay lower wages and don't have our social safety net. But when times are rough, that's when the people in Ontario stand up to the challenge. We pick ourselves up, we dust ourselves off and we get back to work.

The McGuinty government hasn't hidden from this challenge; we have faced it head-on. Our government has responded to the extraordinary challenge of the global recession. Over the past year, we have reformed our provincial tax system to make our province more competitive. We didn't do it because it was easy; if it was easy, others would have already done it. We did it because it was the right thing to do. It means tax cuts for 93% of Ontario taxpayers. It means cutting taxes for businesses so they can reinvest those savings in jobs and more equipment to improve their competitiveness. It means less red tape and paperwork for our business communities.

Independent economists from all sides of the political spectrum say our tax reform plan will create 600,000 new jobs. We put forward a tax reform plan to set the stage to open Ontario for business opportunity.

It was a confusing year for our business community. The opposition Conservatives used to be in favour of tax cuts for families and businesses. The current and past two leaders of the PCs all said our tax reform was the right thing to do, but when we did it, they voted against it.

Last weekend, the Leader of the Opposition said our past throne speeches were works of fiction. Let me talk about a few of the things we've accomplished from previous throne speeches.

In education, we've promised to phase in full-day learning; 35,000 four- and five-year-olds will benefit from that plan this fall. We've improved graduation rates; 70% graduated last year, up from 68% in 2003. We're meeting the standard in reading and writing; test scores are up 13% since 2003 and did not drop last year. We've added \$5 billion to the education budget since 2003. Healthier school menus—our new food guidelines take effect this fall.

In agriculture, we've increased the rural economic development by 50%, and we've announced further increases in the 2008 budget. There is the risk manage-

ment program for grain and oilseed farmers. We encouraged people to purchase local Ontario foods—a \$50-million Pick Ontario Freshness strategy.

For children and youth, we have increased child care spaces. Capacity grew by over 10,000 spaces since 2007.

On poverty, we've raised the minimum wage to \$10.25 an hour. A low-income dental plan—over 41,000 children received treatment in 2009.

These are just a few of the promises that have been kept and programs that have been delivered on, so to say that this is a fantasy or fiction is absolutely incorrect. If people had been paying attention to what we've been doing, they would have realized this. But some choose to live in a dream world.

I'd just like to continue on this. Last weekend, the opposition leader promised his followers tax cuts. We did that last year. You have to pay attention. I will repeat: We cut taxes for 93% of Ontario taxpayers and reduced business taxes, we have reduced red tape for businesses, yet his party voted against every one of these positive reforms.

Open Ontario is about hope; it's about continuing to invest in our infrastructure, roads, bridges, transit, energy and schools—\$32.5 billion in infrastructure over last year and this year. This investment is creating and sustaining 300,000 jobs, keeping all those people working, buying food and clothing, paying taxes and giving them hope, but the opposition voted against this.

0910

In my riding, this investment in infrastructure has meant new hockey arenas under construction in Apsley, soon in Fenelon Falls; supportive housing projects in Lindsay for our neediest constituents; new bridges; a new school; new water and sewer and treatment facilities, new libraries in Haliburton and Minden and on and on—over \$100 million in joint infrastructure funding projects in my riding announced this past year, giving hope to my community.

The opposition didn't support our effort to create jobs. The opposition leader says that we shouldn't be investing that much right now. He is saying we shouldn't be providing our citizens with hope. I believe he's wrong, as does the business community that used to be his core support. Len Crispino of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce said on March 26, 2009, of our tax reform, "It's a very bold step ... it's smart for the time because it's going to take the shackles off business."

Another quote: "Conservatives are mad at me because I have acknowledged the comments made by organizations like the TD Bank, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Institute of Competitiveness for Ontario that there are some economic benefits to this planned HST, which there are." John Tory, November 30 on his radio show on CFRB—I have a past relationship with him.

The Green Energy Act is a visionary plan to move our economy to the forefront of the recovery. Combined with our tax reform, we have made Ontario the place for the world's green energy sector to invest—\$7 billion worth of foreign investment by Samsung that will create 16,000

good jobs for Ontario. But once again the opposition has spoken out against this investment. What message are they sending to our foreign investment partners? Will they tell Toyota, Samsung, General Motors and Chrysler to take a hike in their vision of Ontario? What message is the opposition sending to our construction workers and steelworkers, who will directly benefit from this foreign investment?

Our Second Career strategy has allowed 26,000 Ontarians to return to school for retraining, giving them hope and opportunity. This program has made a difference to thousands of workers who have lost their jobs. It has given them a hand up when they needed it, and it will continue to provide training and support to people across Ontario. I have seen personally the effects that this has had when meeting with workers who have returned to college. For mothers who have gone back to school to be retrained, who want to get back into the workforce, who've lost their jobs, this program is working. The average age of a college student in Ontario is 28 years old. That tells us that people aren't just attending school straight out of high school. They're going out, and now that they've realized the value of post-secondary education, they've returned.

Open Ontario: Our government has said clearly through our actions, not just words, that we are indeed open for business and opportunity. We take our responsibility to govern very seriously. We have a responsibility to help those Ontarians hurt by the recession, but we also recognize the need to look forward, to find solutions and to build new foundations for growth.

The throne speech spoke about how our ancestors built this province. My grandparents settled in the Fort Frances area of Ontario in the 1920s. My mother was born there. My grandfather worked at the paper mill in Fort Frances and then the railway. It was people like him who helped develop Ontario. People from all over the world have come to Ontario to be part of our dream. They all helped to create the Ontario that we live in today. They brought Ontario to the forefront of technology, art, industry and agriculture. They helped create an economy that supports a quality of life for our families that is the envy of the world. The world still wants to come to Ontario, and our government has created the right environment that will encourage their investment.

The next five years will be decisive for Ontario. That is why we are launching our five-year Open Ontario plan. Growing our economy, growing stronger requires that Ontario be open to change, open to opportunities, open to our new world, open to new ideas, new people and new investment. The Open Ontario plan begins with creating a climate where business can thrive, create jobs and build innovative products to sell to the world. Everybody in this room has a BlackBerry. It's one of the innovative creations that was built, created and designed in our province, and it has literally changed the world.

Companies like Samsung are just the beginning of a host of businesses that are looking to Ontario for their future investment. When companies look around the

world to invest, they consider many options and look at many things before making their decisions to locate. General Electric recently announced a \$100-million investment in Peterborough. They could have located in Brazil, China, India—a host of other places—but they came to Ontario for a number of reasons: our tax incentives, our Green Energy Act and our tax structure that we have now created in this province, that makes Ontario open for business and open for investment.

Combine that with our world-class education and health care systems, which are just two of our public services staffed by dedicated professionals who are helping to draw business to our province. Our education system is in a class of its own. Full-day learning, improved graduation rates, more graduates attending post-secondary schools—all of these contribute to creating an Ontario workforce that is second to none.

I'd like to talk about a program that we introduced back in my school board days. We introduced full-day learning in 2003 because we felt that children in our rural areas, and particularly in my school board of Trillium Lakelands, weren't arriving at grade 1 fully prepared. So we put together a program for full-day learning as a pilot project in 18 of our schools, which was controversial when we first put it in. There were people concerned about their children leaving, that they were maybe too young, but it was accepted phenomenally. This was, I think, the basis on which the government came forward. We did a lot of studies and reports on the value it brought to those children in our rural communities and the need to get them on a level footing, because eventually those children will be competing for the same college, post-secondary places or jobs, and it shouldn't matter whether your child lives in Kenora, Cornwall, Timmins or Toronto. All children deserve to be on the same footing and receive the same level of instruction and education.

Our throne speech yesterday spoke of planting our flag for our economic future. We spoke about making Toronto a global leader in the financial services industry. We noted that Canada's banks based in Ontario are widely recognized as the soundest in the world, and that Toronto is now North America's third largest financial centre, home to 350,000 financial sector jobs. Ontario-wide, the sector supports 625,000 jobs. Our government is working to support the industry and create a plan to make Toronto one of the world's elite financial centres. Our universities are graduating the future leaders of the sector, and by supporting them, we will keep our best and brightest minds at home.

We also spoke in the throne speech about water technology. We are blessed in Ontario with having an abundant supply of clean, fresh water, of which I will take a sip. We lead the world in the technology to keep our water clean and pure. As part of our plan to expand our expertise in the field, we will introduce the Water Opportunities Act, which will lay the foundation for new Ontario jobs and help us lead the way in the development and sale of new technologies and services for water conservation and treatment.

Many countries in the world do not have access to clean water, and as demand outstrips supply by 40% in the very near future, our expertise in this field will lead to economic opportunities for Ontario companies worldwide. We will be able to provide hope to people in Third World countries, hope that we in Ontario can change their world for the better by providing them with clean, safe water—something that we take for granted and waste so foolishly.

Recently, with the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, one of the chief things that our country provided was water treatment plants to provide fresh, clean water for the people who had suffered so greatly during the earthquakes. I think that was a great example of the technology that we possess in this country, which we can share with countries around the world. Yes, we need to do work on that here in Ontario too. There are areas of this province that require fresher and cleaner water, and it's one of the things that this act will address. But we need to think about every drop of water we use and misuse. It is the one element in life that we simply can't live without. Our government is committed to strengthening protections for our water, including the Great Lakes.

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I was astonished to read that the Leader of the Opposition ridiculed our government's recent ban on lawn chemicals this past weekend. I live on the Oak Ridges moraine. The headwaters of the Pigeon River system are located on my property. If I were to use lawn chemicals on my property, they would end up in the stream and they would end up in my well. Elementary school science says that if you put chemicals in the ground, they're going to end up in the water. Our children drink that water. To ridicule such an important issue, shows a complete disconnect with the reality of life in both rural and urban Ontario. Quite frankly, I'm appalled by those comments.

Our Open Ontario plan is about jobs. It's about green jobs. It's about smart jobs. It's about financial sector jobs. It's about jobs all over Ontario. It's about jobs in northern Ontario, where this economic downturn has been felt more severely than in other areas of the province. I've driven through northern Ontario recently, and I've seen first-hand the impact that the recession has had on the forestry and the mining sectors. The north needs help, and our Open Ontario plan will help kick-start that help. Driving through northern Ontario and seeing boarded-up buildings and houses for sale is a stark reminder of the assistance that is required, and our government is fully committed to working with northerners to turn this around.

We are also committed to working with our aboriginal communities and mining partners to fully realize the new mining potential that exists in the north. We will work with all of them. The region known as the Ring of Fire located in northwestern Ontario is said to contain one of the largest deposits of chromite, a key ingredient in stainless steel. This is the most promising mining opportunity in Canada in more than a century.

Every one of the initiatives we have presented in our throne speech will inspire job growth. Job growth will

bring stability back to our economy, allowing more money to be invested in local business. As more Ontarians return to work, they will buy more Ontario-grown food. Our government will continue to support growth and expansion of our agri-food sector to create more opportunities to buy local food. We will also work to open new markets outside Ontario.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me just a moment, please. I just ask the members to come to order and allow the speaker to continue.

You may continue.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Thank you, Speaker.

Our government will continue to support growth and expansion of our agri-food sector to create more opportunities to buy local foods. We will also work to open markets outside Ontario. Our recently passed animal safety bill will send the message to the world that our Ontario foods are trusted.

There have been a number of food processing projects that we've established in the past few years that have really helped our systems. One in particular is the Naturally Norfolk food processing plant in Delhi, which has helped tobacco farmers convert to cash crops, and having a processing plant in place has allowed them to expand their operations. It was extremely well received and is just one of the many projects that have gone forward under our government.

Now, shopping for Ontario goods will keep money and jobs in Ontario. I would urge everyone to ask your local grocery stores to stock, highlight and promote Ontario-grown and -raised produce and products.

There have been a number of success stories through our agricultural programs over the past couple of years. Maryland Farms and Jim Callaghan in a dairy operation just outside of Lindsay have got their biodigester all set to run and should be online this summer. They've got an incredibly efficient operation going there, and they will generate enough power to power 400 homes when the operation is up and running this summer.

Kawartha Dairy, known for the amount of product that they put forward, is recently undergoing expansion plans, which is supported by the government, so that their ice cream can be made year-round instead of just in the summer. It will allow better access and more access for the dairy farmers in my area, so that they have a sustainable market they can sell to.

In the area of health care, we have made great strides forward. We have 900,000 more Ontarians who have access to a family doctor than in 2003; we have vastly improved hospital wait times; and we have faster care in emergency rooms. We are committed to a stronger public health care system. But today we face challenges that require a new plan. We all know that we need to have a discussion around the challenges of health care delivery, and our government believes that we need to lead that national dialogue about health care and that we need to engage Ontarians directly in this important conversation.

As our population ages, we know that within a few years about 20% of our population are going to be

seniors. Seniors, through no fault of their own, require additional health care services. We need to address these concerns about how we deliver health care in Ontario so that we can safely and properly address the concerns of our seniors and aging populations.

One of the key things that we can do to help contain health care costs is to do all we can to promote better health for our children. We know that the rising childhood obesity rates are huge. There have been many tests going on about heart conditions and diabetes in young children. We need to do all we can to improve the health of our young children. This could be the first generation in years that may not outlive their parents. That is a shocking statistic. Anything that we can do to improve the health of our young children is dollars well spent.

Just how many health care dollars could we save right now if we all lost a little weight? Diabetes issues, heart conditions, and knee and hip replacements could all be improved. Many of the things caused by a propensity in all of us to gain weight could be helped if we could help control some of these self-inflicted health problems. If we all just dropped a little weight, I'm sure we would help to save millions of dollars in our health care system.

More people working means that more people are off social assistance. More people will be paying, contributing to the economy; more people will have hope. This will allow our government to continue to provide the services that so many of our seniors and our vulnerable citizens rely on. Strong companies make for stable pensions and stable social services. They are the foundation of our economy.

As our economy continues to recover, our government will continue to provide and improve our health care and education systems. Nothing is more important to our economy than our education system. Our government continues to keep education as our highest priority. Education is what gives us our competitive edge. We know that the places with the strongest schools today will have the strongest economies tomorrow. We know we need to reach higher. We are already home to many of the brightest builders, dreamers and innovators of the future.

We have made great progress in education since 2003. We have reduced class sizes, raised test scores, increased the graduation rate and added 180,000 students to our colleges, universities and apprenticeships. We enjoy one of the highest rates of post-secondary education in the world, at 62%, but we need to reach higher. We will reach for 70% attendance in post-secondary education.

We will open Ontario colleges and universities to the world and we will work to increase international enrolment by 50% while maintaining spaces for Ontario students.

In Fleming College in Haliburton this past year—the Ontario Online Institute—we have done a lot of work so that students can take courses in rural areas. The Ontario Online Institute, which was talked about in yesterday's throne speech, will allow more of our rural students to attend schools online and will be a great thing for rural Ontario. I'm very pleased to see that come forward.

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Education will enable us to be smarter than those we compete with. Education will enable our economy to grow stronger. Education will enable our farmers to grow better crops and raise more productive animals. Education will allow our financial sector to reach its full potential. Education has made Ontario a world leader in water technology. Education will allow our province to continue to provide the best service and support for our seniors—and to all our seniors through our health care sector. Education will help break the cycle of poverty.

What will our young people discover through education that will change the world? We know that today there are young children in schools who are just open to ideas and open to creativity. Giving them the tools to succeed will allow them to change the world. Hopefully, a student who is currently going to school in Ontario will some day stand up and announce that they've found a cure for cancer. They'll some day stand up and announce that they've found a way to dispose of nuclear waste in a safe way. These are things that we need to inspire our young people to achieve and to shoot for, because people in Ontario can demonstrate leadership for ideas, for a plan.

We have an Open Ontario plan—a plan for jobs and economic growth; a plan for hope; a plan that will provide hope for Ontario, for Ontario to release its potential. In yesterday's throne speech, we said, "Where others see a world that threatens, Ontarians see opportunity that beckons."

The world has changed. Ontario has changed. I urge everyone in this Legislature and across this beautiful province to support our throne speech and support our plan to open Ontario to the world. We have opened Ontario—a clear plan for jobs, economic growth and hope.

In closing, I would just like to say that yesterday was my first opportunity since being elected to attend a throne speech. It was an honoured tradition and one that I really was thrilled to be able to participate in. With dignity and respect, we sat at attention to hear the speech from the throne delivered by the Lieutenant Governor. With pageantry and formality inherited from years past, a vision of hope and future prosperity was painted with each word. Yet I was disappointed to observe a level of disrespect from Her Majesty's loyal opposition. Members walked in late, they had side conversations, and some actually heckled the Lieutenant Governor. While I'm not surprised to witness a level of disrespect for the government by the opposition, what was revealed yesterday was a level of contempt for this chamber and the job we do collectively. I was deeply disappointed, and I hope that at some point in time the Speaker will do something about that.

I thank you for having the opportunity to speak to the throne speech this morning. Open Ontario is a great plan for Ontario. We have a plan, and we're moving forward.

I would like to ask my colleague Ms. Van Bommel to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I, too, am extremely honoured to have the opportunity to second the speech from the throne brought forward by the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable David Onley, on this, the second day of the second session of the 39th Parliament.

Before getting into my comments about the throne speech, I would like to congratulate the new members from St. Paul's, Toronto Centre, Leeds-Grenville, and Ottawa West-Nepean on their recent victories in the by-elections. This is, for them, their first throne speech as legislators, and I'm sure it will be remembered as one of many firsts for them here at Queen's Park.

I would also like to welcome back the two members who have enjoyed a prolonged winter recess from the House: the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, who I saw here earlier this morning, and the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. It's good to see them back, and I'm looking forward to seeing them in action again as they represent their constituents.

Last but not least, I want to thank the member from the beautiful riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for his perceptive comments on the throne speech. I know this is also, as he has stated, his first throne speech as a new MPP, and I know he feels very honoured, and he should, for having moved the throne speech. The member has done an exceptional job for his constituents since his by-election, and I know he will continue to do that for all of his constituents. His experience as a public school trustee, as well as his experience in the business world, will serve his constituents well as he advocates for positive change in his constituency and for the province as a whole.

At this time, I would like to speak about some of the themes brought forward by the Lieutenant Governor in yesterday's speech from the throne. While all are important, there are certainly those that have a special significance for my constituents and all rural Ontarians; among them, a plan for our economy, a plan for education, a plan for health care and a plan for agriculture and rural economic development.

These plans make up an important part of our government's overall Open Ontario plan and will have a distinct impact on every region in this diverse province. We have seen the world around us change radically since our government began its work in 2003. That reality caused the McGuinty government to approach this recession with innovation and vision. The five-year Open Ontario plan will lay a new foundation for an evolution that will take us into the next decade by opening this province to new opportunities, new jobs and new growth, and that is positive news for my constituents.

It is truly impossible to ignore the presence of the recession. We all know someone—a friend or a family member—who has lost their source of income, or seen their savings dry up or their pensions impacted. Newspaper headlines and television news broadcasts constantly remind us of our current situation, but there is also no shortage of good-news stories that provide the silver lining in a storm and the assurance for tomorrow.

Like the rest of Ontario and the world, my riding has not been spared the effects of the current global economic recession. Although job losses in the manufacturing sector have been significant, my constituents, like our government, displayed and continue to display a resilience and an unwillingness to accept defeat in the face of challenges not seen in this generation.

By the time I was elected in 2003, Wallaceburg in my constituency had already suffered extensive manufacturing plant closures and job losses. With the financial assistance of our government, the vision of Chatham-Kent's council and mayor, and the determination of Stuart McFadden and the Wallaceburg task force, this community is leading the way out of the recession in my riding.

In December, I was able to announce the expansion of Advanced Emissions Technologies Ltd. to Wallaceburg, with a grant from the rural economic development fund. The company produces patented, made-in-Ontario piping and pressure vessel testing tools. This investment will create opportunities for 50 to 75 new, highly skilled manufacturing jobs, with the potential for 50 to 150 more jobs in the long term, and that includes enhanced skills training opportunities within an expanding manufacturing sector for my constituents, as well as creating new, spin-off business for other tool manufacturing businesses.

One month later, I was pleased to announce that our government would be supporting the opening of another new manufacturing facility in Wallaceburg, which would create approximately 64 new jobs when that plant opens later this year. Precismeca Ltd. is an international company that is a recognized leader in providing conveyor systems for the mining industry, and they are investing nearly \$3 million to equip the plant, including an \$894,000 loan from our government's advanced manufacturing investment strategy fund, or AMIS, as we know it. The provincial funding will be used towards the purchase of state-of-the-art equipment and design software, giving the company a competitive advantage in a changing marketplace.

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The local workforce in the Wallaceburg area is the main reason why Precismeca chose to relocate in Ontario from Alberta. The availability of highly skilled labour will ensure the company is able to achieve its long-term business plans. While naysayers like the leader of the official opposition mistakenly call these partnerships "corporate welfare," this government sees investments similar to the ones given to Precismeca and Advanced Emissions Technologies as one of the ways that will see our government free itself of the tight grip of the global economic recession. We will become recognized globally as a leading jurisdiction that is open for business.

As a mother of five and a grandmother of 13, it should come as no surprise that I would want to talk about education in my seconding of the speech from the throne this morning. All of us know that good-quality education lays the groundwork for a successful future.

Our government has always and will continue to pride itself on being a champion of public education. We have

moved forward in leaps and bounds in the last six and a half years. Elementary students' reading, math and writing scores have increased by 13%. Graduation rates are also up as 77% graduated last year, up from 68% in 2003. And parents now have more resources and opportunities to get involved with their children's education.

I also want to thank my colleague Liz Sandals, the MPP for Guelph, for her work on our safe schools legislation, which has ensured Ontario's places to learn are a safer and more welcoming environment for our students.

Our government has worked extremely hard to rebuild positive relationships with the education sector and to foster an atmosphere and an environment where all teachers and educational support staff are appreciated. Gone are the days when parents were faced with a government that was determined to create a crisis in education—and the resulting endless rounds of teacher strikes. I remember them well—

Mr. Jeff Leal: I remember those days.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: —as does my colleague from Peterborough, and we all know the stress that that created, not only for the students, who were left to wonder how they were going to complete their education, but also for the parents who were trying to deal with how to take care of young children when the parents were both working.

Not a day goes by when we can't see the transformational and positive influence that education has on the lives of our children, the lives of their families and the surrounding communities that these families call home.

In 2004, my riding was selected to be a demonstration site for the rural Best Start program. This was the introduction to early learning for many of my constituents. Sites were created in rural schools that reflected the local culture. The French influence was apparent in Pain Court in the language and the décor. In Brooke-Alvington, the new entrance to the school and Best Start area resembles a farm silo. And in Sarnia, the aboriginal Best Start reflects the traditions of the Aamjiwnaang First Nation of that area.

Our province's education system truly made a difference in the lives of these Best Start children, and now our government is moving forward on a pivotal transformation of our public education system: the implementation of full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. Though not all parents have access to full-day learning this September, parents of 35,000 four- and five-year-olds will benefit, and in my riding, nine schools will offer the program this year.

The program is not mandatory, but the number of parents in my home area of Middlesex who have approached me to say that they will be sending their four- and five-year-olds to the first available program tells me that we are not only doing the right thing for the next generation but that the parents and grandparents of these children understand the importance of this opportunity that is being offered to their children and grandchildren. This government, like the parents of Middlesex, Lambton and Chatham-Kent, understands what it takes for our children to be the leaders of tomorrow.

As I have made my way from one corner of my large riding to another, I have met with constituents and had an opportunity to hear more about their concerns, and I hear more about our health care system than almost any other provincial issue. In rural and northern areas of this province, access to timely and appropriate health care is not only important for the day-to-day lives of my constituents but also for the economic development of our communities.

Yesterday, the Lieutenant Governor spoke about this government's plan to continue improving our health care system by pursuing a path of constant reform. That includes things such as prescription drugs and making them affordable, legislation to make health care providers and executives accountable for improving care, and further legislation to create a hospital system that will utilize the expertise of our community partners and health care professionals. Along with these changes, this government will continue building on successes like our wait time reduction strategy, and add to the 900,000 Ontarians who now have a family doctor.

In the latter part of 2009, I had the opportunity to make an announcement that demonstrates this government's commitment to a strong public health care system and access for my constituents in rural Lambton county. We recognized that Petrolia was an area of the province with a high number of patients who had no family doctor. As a result, a new family health team will be established that will provide better access to care closer to home, with physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, social workers and dietitians.

Mr. Jeff Leal: The oil capital of Ontario.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: The oil capital of Ontario.

The team will also help reduce emergency department use by providing non-emergency care, and I know from talking with the professionals in my area that it is very welcome in Lambton county by both patients and health care professionals alike.

Our government's existing 150 teams have already enrolled more than 318,000 patients who did not have access to a family physician before, and are providing quality health care to more than two million people. This moves us closer to the quality health care my constituents expect and deserve.

All members of this House recognize how important the agricultural sector is to my riding and my constituency. I know I've talked about it many, many times here in the House over the last six and a half years.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You're a great supporter of supply management.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I am a great supporter of supply management. Yes, indeed.

While agriculture is recognized as the second-leading economic driver in this province, I would venture to say that in the riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, food production has returned to its ranking as the primary force in our local economy.

We all understand that one of the components to living a long and healthy life is the existence of a nutritious diet

filled with fruits, vegetables, carbohydrates and proteins. I'm sure that all of us have noticed more and more fresh Ontario produce showing up in the local grocery stores, at seasonal farmers' markets in urban areas, or at roadside stands for those of us lucky enough to live in rural areas.

Mr. Jeff Leal: We're shipping tomatoes to Florida now.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: We are shipping tomatoes to Florida.

Increasingly, Ontarians are taking an interest in our local food. We understand that when they buy local foods, they are helping to support Ontario's farmers, food processors, local economies and the environment. Ontario's food producers make a tremendous contribution to our economy and our rural communities. They grow, raise and produce high-quality food products that are among the best in the world.

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Our government continues to take action to increase consumer awareness of and demand for fresh, high-quality local food produced in this province. We are working with farmers and various local associations in my constituency and across the province, including farmers' markets, to increase our fresh food production and to bring Ontario's bountiful local food to all our dinner tables.

Mr. Jeff Leal: How many markets do you have in your riding?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I can't tell, but I have lots of farm markets in my riding, and lots of roadside stands as well.

We have increased funding for the Foodland Ontario local foods promotion, which has expanded beyond fruit and vegetables to include meats, bakery and processed foods, reminding us all that good things grow in Ontario—and I will resist singing the logo.

In 2008, we launched a new multimillion-dollar, four-year Ontario market investment fund, a part of the Pick Ontario Freshness strategy, which includes support for local food networks and other industry efforts in promoting local food.

We are also leading by example. We recognize that serving Ontario foods in cafeterias and food service venues provides healthy menu choices for the public. Over 20 government cafeterias now prominently promote and feature Ontario foods, including our own Queen's Park dining room and cafeteria.

Tax reform is important to Ontario's farmers. We started by exempting the land transfer tax on farms that changed ownership between members of the same family, and in 2008, we extended that exemption further by including transfers of corporate farms to family members. The move to a single sales tax process is welcomed by Ontario's farmers who will no longer have to file separately for PST-exempt items that they purchased in retail stores that were not equipped to deal with the requests by farmers for an exemption. Most farmers let the PST exemptions slide rather than go through the

time-consuming paperwork required to claim what was rightfully theirs. Now, when they make their GST claim they will also be making their PST claim at the same time, and that returns important dollars to their cash flows.

Since 2003, 240 projects have been approved under the rural economic development program, with a total provincial commitment of approximately \$77.5 million, which has in turn generated approximately \$651.5 million in new economic activity. I want to say that these investments have made a real, positive difference for my communities in my riding.

I would be remiss in not pointing out an encouraging story for the food processing sector in Chatham-Kent. In June of last year, Thames Van Farms were successful in their application to the rural economic development plan. The province is providing more than \$1 million to retrofit the green shipping facility. This funding will not only create jobs and retain 100 full- and part-time plant positions and more than 2,000 seasonal jobs, but the investment will also help Thames Van Farms Ltd. become globally competitive as a cucumber grading facility, increasing the potential for new contracts for up to 150 new growers. By increasing the productivity within Thames Van Farms, they will have the opportunity to regain approximately 1,000 acres worth of high-value crop that was lost through increased foreign competition and volatile markets.

Also through the RED program, a grant of \$500,000 was given for beach enhancement at Grand Bend last year. As a result of the hard work by the local community, the beach will now claim its Blue Flag designation, an internationally recognized identification of the restoration of natural habitat, water quality and conservation that has occurred on the beachfront. Everything was in place for Grand Bend's first Aquafest, a celebration of the one thing most Ontarians take for granted: water. And tourism, which was always strong in this area, will draw even more international visitors to their pristine beaches. RED continues to be an important funding program, and participation in this partnership program continues to grow as it addresses the funding needs of some very innovative rural Ontarians.

Farmers throughout my riding are participating in green energy production. A number of sleek wind turbines already lined the fields between Forest and Grand Bend more than a year before the Green Energy Act was passed in this House. These six turbines in Lambton county are expected to produce roughly 30 million kilowatt hours of electricity annually, at full capacity, enough to power 3,000 homes. This project, among others in my riding and throughout the province, is only the beginning of the green energy potential for Ontario.

Laurie and Sandy Stanton and their sons were well ahead of the green energy curve when they decided to build their new dairy operation, Stanton Farms. Together with the Universities of Guelph, Waterloo and Western, they have collaborated to complete a biogas demonstration facility that will not only provide electricity for the

farm but also power the neighbouring community of Ilderton.

Our Green Energy Act has made our community and the province the leader in clean energy and is also a key component of our Open Ontario plan. Over the next few years, this province will build a cluster of clean technology companies that will build their goods here and sell them to the rest of the world. Municipalities like Chatham-Kent have been waiting for this very opportunity to compete for the green energy manufacturing jobs that these companies can potentially bring to their municipalities.

Yesterday, the Lieutenant Governor announced our intention to introduce the Water Opportunities Act. With this act, we will lay out a plan that will help us conserve more water at home and develop the technologies that are already in demand around the world.

Trojan Technologies, a company headquartered in London, Ontario, began in 1976 when Hank Vander Laan bought Trojan Metal Works. Mr. Vander Laan didn't purchase Trojan because of its specialty in manufacturing tool boxes; he bought the company because he noticed it had a patent on a small UV treatment unit for homeowners to purify their drinking water. Back in 1976, he recognized the benefits of ultraviolet light as a more environmentally friendly alternative to chemical water treatment. Fast-forward through two decades and you will see a company that has installed thousands of ultraviolet disinfection systems in over 25 countries, and now is a world leader in UV waste water disinfection.

Not content, Trojan Technologies decided to expand their application of ultraviolet light for large-scale drinking water disinfection, and by 2002, Trojan had won contracts to supply equipment to three of the largest ultraviolet drinking water plants in the world. With companies like Trojan, Ontario has quietly become a world leader in clean water technology.

Mr. Jeff Leal: The city of Peterborough bought some of their equipment.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: There you go.

The Open Ontario plan and the proposed Water Opportunities Act will help Ontario businesses like Trojan Technologies to leverage our clean water expertise. We can help growing countries like China and India with the technology needed to have their own safe, clean water supply.

Today is my granddaughter Kristina's birthday. She is now 17 years old, and when I reflect on how much things have already changed since her birth in 1993, I can't help but wonder what her world will look like in another 17 years. Do you remember when we were 17? I do. We had so many opportunities.

Hon. John Milloy: It was 10 years ago.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: For some of us it was 10 years ago, for some of us a bit longer. So many things lay ahead of us. The world was our oyster. Everything was laid out ahead of us and we couldn't wait to grow up and take advantage of everything the world had to offer.

Kristina basically has the same dreams that her parents and her grandparents had at that age, but she is living in a time of radical change and the things she aspires to today may not even exist any more by the time she reaches my age of 60.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Sixty? You don't look 60.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I am 60.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You're kidding.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: You can't have 13 grandchildren and not be 60.

Education is key to the new generation of jobs that await her. Ontario's ability to compete globally for the new generation of jobs is critical to her finding employment when she's ready. She will likely spend a great part of her life returning to education over and over again in order to remain competitive in the labour force and the workforce.

In order to achieve all this, we need to tackle the deficit in a responsible and well-thought-out way that will not rob her and her generation of the gains that we have made as a government and as a society. But at the same time, we cannot leave her generation with a debt that cripples their future.

I welcome healthy and constructive debate from all sides of the House over the next few days on our government's throne speech and our five-year Open Ontario plan, as well as the countless ways that we have rebuilt and continue to improve the services that are so crucial to all Ontarians. But I fear that, as much as the opposition leaders and their caucus members may debate the throne speech, their plan for Ontario remains the same, and that is to say that they have no plan. If there was one theme that was common in yesterday's speech from the throne, it was that our government has a plan for Ontario's future with the creation of jobs, not just for those who have lost their jobs in this recession, but for our future generations.

The McGuinty government is committed to building a province that mirrors the ideals of the people in Ontario, including our immigrants and our aboriginal people. There are a number of important issues that I would have loved to address in the past 30 minutes, but the time did not allow it. That certainly includes issues around the needs of the aboriginal people of my riding. I do want to make sure that my constituents understand that I am extremely mindful of those needs and that I will work for them through the Open Ontario plan and through this throne speech to ensure that they are served in a way that they deserve and in a way that they expect to be served.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: Madam Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: No further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1030.

The House recessed from 1004 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a great honour for me to introduce, in the members' east gallery today, Angela Pind, mother of page Jordan Pind from Peterborough, and Jordan's grandfather Jim Marsden. For many years I've had the pleasure of working with Jim, a former president of the Legion in Lakefield, Ontario, in the riding of Peterborough.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like the assembly to welcome Stanley and Edith Heleniak, who are here to visit page Rachael Heleniak, their daughter. The Heleniaks are in the members' gallery. I'd also like to welcome Andrew, her brother, who is enjoying the day away from school to be here today. Welcome to Queen's Park. I hope you enjoy your visit.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my honour to introduce Emily Musing, who is the mother of Max Musing, the page from Beaches-East York. She will be joined later this afternoon by Max's father, Michael Musing, and Max's grandmother Ursula Musing. They're all going to be here to watch Max do his wondrous duty here at Queen's Park and, I'm sure, to enjoy the proceedings.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: It's my pleasure to welcome members of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario to the Legislature today, including David Sculthorpe, the CEO; Laura Syron, vice-president, research and advocacy; Mary Lewis, director of government relations; Marco Di Buono, director of research; Sharon Brodovsky, senior manager, Spark Together for Healthy Kids; Nadia Yee, senior manager, government relations; Cristin Napier, government relations. They will be here today to meet with MPPs and also for a reception from 5 to 7 in the legislative dining room.

I would also like to welcome my friend Sharon Dongen, from my colleague Wayne Arthurs's riding, to the Legislature today.

Mr. Paul Miller: In the members' west gallery, I'd like to introduce Dushawn Rodish. Dushawn is a graduate of the U of T political science program, and he's here to learn about politics.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: It's my pleasure to introduce a former page, Hannah Jansen, who's up there watching her brother Colin, who is a page right now. Welcome back.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's my pleasure to welcome Hani Louis here today, father of page Julia Louis. She must be a very popular person because it seems that I'm standing on my feet every second day inviting one of her guests here. Thank you.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have the pleasure to introduce to you a delegation from the People's Republic of China, specifically from Anhui province. They are being led by

Mr. Liu, who is actually representing the government of Anhui province. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Ajax-Pickering and page Matthew Kostuch, to welcome his mother, Christine Kostuch; his sisters Jessica Kostuch and Kristen Kostuch; and his friends Wendy Kelly and Olivia Kelly to the Legislature today.

Just for the members' information, the pages were prorogued as well; unlike some bills etc., they were carried over to the next session.

There being no further introductions, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Acting Premier: What was most interesting about your tired, same-old, same-old throne speech was what the throne speech did not contain.

We have seen a pattern develop of the McGuinty government saying one thing in its throne speeches and doing the opposite. In the 2003 throne speech, Dalton McGuinty did not mention that he wanted to make Ontario families pay the single largest income tax increase in the province's history, and then later on he brought in the so-called health tax that nailed hard-working Ontario families with a massive new tax hike.

Acting Premier, given that you have no plan to balance the books, what new McGuinty surprise tax increase can we expect to hear about in the time ahead?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite wants to keep looking back—and by the way, not looking back in what I would call an accurate fashion.

I would remind him that the speech from the throne spoke of our need for more clean energy, which we think is enormously important to economic growth. It spoke of a clean water strategy, and I'd remind the member opposite that this month marks the 10th anniversary of Walkerton, an anniversary that brings back a lot of memories of a time that that member would like to go back to.

We brought forward a tax reform package that lowers taxes for Ontario's poorest; we brought in a tax package that will create 600,000 jobs, according to the Tories' lead expert.

This Premier, Premier McGuinty, has a plan that will take this province forward, a plan to create jobs and a plan that will balance the budget. That's more—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think Ontario families see through this, Acting Premier. With that empty, same-old, same-old throne speech, the only plan Dalton McGuinty has is

to hit Ontario families with another massive tax increase in the time ahead.

We saw, for example, again, in your 2005 throne speech, that while you did mention the City of Toronto Act, you did not mention that that would mean a tax increase on ordinary, hard-working families in the city of Toronto. It turns out that that meant the ability for David Miller to double-tax Toronto families when they sell their homes, when they register their cars, or to hike fees on garbage collection and start charging them for plastic grocery bags.

You didn't tell us about the health tax and you didn't tell us about the city of Toronto taxes. I'll ask you again: What new tax hike do you have up your sleeve, finance minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We laid out the largest tax cut in Ontario history a year ago, and that member and his party, having said that we should do it, then voted against it.

That leader has a new logo, but he has no plan. He has no plan to deal with the unemployment challenge that Ontario is faced with; this Premier and his government have that plan. That leader and his plan want to go back. Their idea of leading Ontario is to close schools, to close hospitals, to lay off water inspectors, to lay off nurses, to lay off teachers. They were wrong then, and they're wrong now.

This is about building a new and better future for Ontario. It's not about going back to a distant past where we're reminded yet again of Walkerton, of Ipperwash, of a failed regime, a failed ideology, a failed policy. Premier McGuinty will lead Ontario back—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Start the clock.

Final supplementary?

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: Certainly a lot of hot air from the finance minister, but no answers for ordinary families that have been nailed over and over again by surprise tax increases. You made no mention of your health tax, but you hit families with it. You made no mention of the new taxes in the city of Toronto in a previous throne speech, but you nailed families in Toronto with a tax increase. In the 2007 throne speech, you made no mention of the HST sales tax grab that's going to hit families hard with 8% more on gas for their cars and heat for their homes. Families do not believe Dalton McGuinty any more and this throne speech is not worth the paper it's written on.

You have no plan to balance the books; you have the biggest deficit in the history of this great province. So I ask you minister, will you roll up your sleeves and reveal what you have? What's the next new McGuinty tax grab you're going to unleash on hard-working Ontario families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontario families wanted reduced wait times and they got reduced wait times. Ontario families—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and the member from Lanark will come to order, please.

Continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontario families wanted more teachers in the classroom; this government delivered it. Ontario families rejected their ideology and their policy of scapegoating public servants, educators and others who contribute so much to our children's futures. They wanted that and they got it. They wanted a tax reform plan that would create jobs. This government and Premier laid that out.

Now they know that our world has changed as a result of the greatest recession in many, many years. Premier McGuinty has laid out a plan. It is about clean energy, clean water, tax reform. It's about a range of issues that will build that better future and create jobs. A plan—something that party never had and doesn't have today.

GOVERNMENT ASSETS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier. Insight Research Canada of New Brunswick is currently polling Ontario families on a 20% sale of LCBO, Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. Given that you've paid for polling, finance minister, why was there nothing said in your same old same old throne speech about a fire sale of crown assets?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think we've been very clear that we're looking at our assets. We're looking at them from a variety of angles, but we're looking to see—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You're looking at covering your assets.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew, withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No. Please stand and withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdrawn.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have been very clear about that. We've also been very clear that no decisions have been made. I spoke last week about the principles that would underline any kind of transaction involving all or part of our assets. We laid that out very clearly. We did say that we wouldn't do what they wanted to do, which was to take a whole asset and sell it. We wouldn't do what they did with the 407—give up an asset and give the owner the right to raise prices as much as they want. No, we're taking a thoughtful, clear approach to this. It's the right approach, and very different from what they attempted to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: This just proves that Dalton McGuinty's throne speeches are not worth the paper they're written on. You say one thing in the throne speech and do something else entirely.

We understand as well, finance minister, you've hired aggressive Wall Street banking firm Goldman Sachs to

tell you how to bundle up these crown corporations into one mega-corporation and proceed with a fire sale of crown assets.

I'll ask you again, Minister: If your plan was to lump these agencies into one mega-corporation and use the fire sale to fuel your runaway spending, why didn't you at least put your plans in the throne speech so Ontario families know what you're all about?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We indicated late last year that we were doing a thorough review of our assets to make sure that the assets are being maximized. We've said that there has been no determination. We are looking at a variety of factors as we move forward.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: It's very appropriate.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I do think it's appropriate; I do think it's appropriate to get outside advice, as we have done, including the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and others.

I can tell the member opposite that we have to look forward to these kinds of challenges. We have to make sure that we examine every aspect of the balance sheet, as well as the income statement. I think we have an obligation to assure ourselves that Ontario's assets are being well-managed and properly managed. That doesn't involve a fire sale like the 407, and it doesn't involve selling off a complete asset, like they wanted to do with Hydro One; it involves making sure that our assets are being properly managed and that Ontarians are getting—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Each and every hour, Dalton McGuinty is spending \$2.8 million more than he takes in in revenue. He has upped the deficit to the biggest in the history of this province, and his throne speech only had 24 words mentioning any plan to balance the books. With a \$25-billion deficit, it's more than \$1 billion per word.

Taxpayers want to know, what is your plan? You're either going to increase taxes or have a fire sale of crown assets—and we saw what this means with eHealth: Liberal friends and insiders got rich at the trough and Ontario families got nothing in return. We fear that eHealth is just going to be the appetizer to your Liberal friends for a feeding frenzy with crown assets.

Minister, how much are Liberal insiders—how much will Goldman Sachs—make off this deal to sell off 20% of crown assets?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I want to re-emphasize that the government is merely looking at its assets. No decisions have been taken. At the appropriate time, if a decision is made, we will have a full and broad public consultation on all these matters.

I would remind the member opposite—the member is right to be concerned. We have an example of an asset sale that went very wrong when he and his party sold the 407 and gave away the pricing power, and they can raise prices in an unlimited fashion. We even attempted to fix that in court. They have done such a good job of protecting the person who bought it versus Ontario motorists

that there was no way to undo that deal that you and Mike Harris made.

There's no question that Ontarians understand that, like every jurisdiction, we've gone through a terrible recession—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Ontario families are worried about jobs, about retirement, about whether they're going to be able to afford to put their kids through school. You would have thought that this government would have addressed some of these worries, yet yesterday we were witness to a throne speech that showed this government either doesn't care or just doesn't understand.

Given all that we know, how could this government have put forward a plan that ignores everyday anxieties Ontarians are dealing with?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite must have been in a different room; the throne speech was all about jobs. First of all, we spoke about our \$32.5-billion commitment to infrastructure, which that member and her party voted against. It was all about clean energy—clean energy that will create some 50,000 jobs in the coming years. It's all about a tax cut package that will create more than 600,000 jobs in the next 10 years.

That member must have gotten it all wrong, because, in fact, Ontario families—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've heard nothing from the third party but empty, tired rhetoric, with no plan for the future, no plan that addresses the job situation in Ontario.

When we went in to assist the auto companies, that member and her party didn't support it. When we wanted to build new public transit in Toronto, to buy cars from Thunder Bay, that member and her party were opposed to it. That member and her party want to raise the provincial sales—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?
1050

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Cambridge will please come to order.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In homes across Ontario, alarm bells are going off, and instead of seizing the moment, the McGuinty government reached out and hit the snooze button. Ontarians were looking for realistic and practical solutions and they were left scratching their heads. As this government offers grandiose plans to export clean water technology, hundreds of Ontario communities deal with boil-water advisories. As they vaguely promise to recruit more foreign students, Ontario stu-

dents cope with per capita post-secondary funding that is dead last in all of Canada.

Why is this government so out of touch with the real and pressing needs of Ontarians?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think Ontarians recognize the need to fix up our water system precisely because of that. I think Ontarians recognize the importance of multiculturalism and drawing many new students into Ontario. I hope you and your party will support that and won't try to block it. I think Ontarians recognize that clean energy is important. The Green Energy Act started that process. That party may not support it; I think Ontarians do.

I think Ontarians are looking for real answers, not the kinds of answers that party gives, living in the past, not addressing the future, not responding to the very real challenges in the new global economy. That's the plan we've laid out—no plan over there, no ideas, no future. This government has a plan, and the right plan, for the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People want good jobs. They want a secure retirement. They want health care services that are there for them when they actually need them. Rather than addressing these issues, the McGuinty government offered recycled commitments, vague schemes and empty promises; a plan for financial services that they announced in the last budget; a plan to develop jobs in the north a decade from now.

Does the McGuinty government have a real plan to help people with the challenges they're facing today, and if so, when might Ontarians actually be able to see it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think the Ring of Fire is about right now. I'm astounded that the NDP would speak against doing something on the Ring of Fire. I was in Thunder Bay and Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie and that's what I heard about from Ontarians all over the place.

So you guys talk a good game over there. You say you're about fixing the north. But as soon as we come out with a plan, what do they do? They're against it.

I'm reminded yet again, this party doubled tuition for Ontario students way back when. People haven't forgotten that.

This government has a plan for the future. It is helping to build northern Ontario, to help that area get through this difficult time. They know who is on their side. It's Premier McGuinty and the Liberal members from that area. We're in favour of working on the Ring of Fire. I'm disappointed that you would be opposed to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What I know for sure is that somebody should dump some cold water on that little ring of fire across the way.

GOVERNMENT ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. It wasn't so long ago that current

members of the McGuinty government spoke out against the selling off of public assets in this province. In 2002, the Premier himself spoke about Hydro One from this side of the House. Here is what he said:

"You find yourselves now in desperate financial circumstances. You want to sell off Hydro One so you can balance the budget. In the end, it's going to be consumers who will continue to pay the price for your mismanagement and bungling."

My question is this: Why is this government now so keen about selling off public assets?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are looking at the management of our assets to ensure that Ontarians are getting the maximum value for them. I think that's fully appropriate. I think it is the right way to do it. I think it takes time to do the kinds of due diligence you need to do if you are going to assure yourself and, more importantly, assure Ontarians that those assets are being properly managed.

We will continue that process. We will engage in a public discussion around any options and all options that could be part of a future decision. But unlike the member opposite, we will continue to look at that. We'll look at every aspect of the balance sheet, we'll look at every aspect of the income statement, and we think that's the right thing to do in these circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier, back when he was in opposition, was critical of schemes to sell off even a part of Hydro One. He said, "During the last three years, it earned a profit in excess of \$1 billion. Why would you not keep Hydro One entirely public and use those profits to help keep rates down...?"

It's a good question. Why won't the McGuinty government use the profit-making public assets Ontario owns to protect programs and services, and to make life more affordable for Ontarians?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Premier and I both laid out the principles that would go into any transaction; that is, in fact, we would improve income as a result of any transaction involving assets. I think it's incumbent upon us to look at those questions. When you have billions and billions of taxpayer monies tied up in a range of companies, it's important to ensure that taxpayers and Ontarians in general are getting the best value for those particular assets.

Unlike the member opposite, I want to look at these things. I want to understand them and I want to ensure that, in fact, we're maximizing income from those assets. It is the right thing to do, it is the appropriate thing to do, and I think Ontarians would see it that way after they've seen a whole bunch of other ideas and research. There have been no decisions taken.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Acting Premier talks a good game, but truthfully, I wouldn't trust his government to manage a garage sale, let alone a multi-billion-dollar transaction involving Ontario's public assets.

Selling off public assets might be good for the Premier, for his party and for investment bankers, but it's sure going to be a raw deal for the people of this province.

My question is this: Why is the government so hell-bent on plowing ahead with a scheme that they once denounced as bad for Ontario families and that will likely leave them fleeced in the end?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thought the voters in two ridings last week said what they thought about the New Democratic Party when they didn't get their deposit back in either riding and when they came in fourth behind the Green Party in one of the two ridings.

It's amazing what can happen to a once-great political party. I think it's because they won't look at these tough questions. They won't examine things from what I would call an objective point of view, and look Ontarians in the eye and say, "You know what? Things are good here. Maybe that's what we'll find out," or alternatively, "Maybe they're not as good as they could be."

I think it's important to look at those issues. I think it's important to assure Ontarians that our balance sheet is as strong as it can be, and as we move back into growth, we're going to continue to do that in consultation with all Ontarians.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Minister, you would know that the Minister of Health's assertion that she is repatriating the OHIP-funded procedures Dalton McGuinty has contracted out to the US health care providers is simply laughable. As the minister for procurement, you know that this is because you are the bulk buyer of health care from American hospitals and clinics. You signed the contracts.

Minister, you should acknowledge that this bulk-buying of US health care is making a mockery out of Ontario's excellent health care system. Would you admit that here today?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: This question is for the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me set the record straight. It is absolutely not true that we're paying US medical brokers to arrange procedures for Ontarians travelling out of the country for medical treatment.

The ministry uses one Canadian provider; it's called the Canadian Medical Network. They look after very complex cases. Approximately 35 cases per year are looked after by the Canadian Medical Network. That is less than 1% of the cases. Once again, the members opposite need to get their facts straight.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I redirect this back to the Minister of Government Services, because it does apply to the fact that on page 11 of your throne speech, the government says that no one who gets sick will be turned away. What they fail

to mention is that they will have to go to one of Dalton McGuinty's US health care brokers. There has been a report issued by Metroland that says that since last spring, McGuinty has signed health care contracts with 40 American hospitals and clinics, making them "preferred providers," while at the same time you're playing silly games with the opposition about proactive disclosure.

1100

Minister Takhar won't release the contracts he signed to send Ontario patients to US health care. My question to the minister is, are these more untendered contracts? Is there something else that Minister Takhar and Dalton McGuinty are trying to hide from the people of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me speak to, actually, the largest group of patients who historically were sent out of the country. Those were patients who needed bariatric surgery. In the final years of the last regime of the Conservative government, they cut bariatric surgery in Ontario. Dr. Michael Grace in London was performing bariatric surgery; they shut that program down.

We are repatriating that program right now. This year, over 1,000 people who would have gone out of country for bariatric surgery received that program here in Ontario. Next year, that program will expand even further. The number of people leaving Ontario for bariatric surgery has now been reduced to a mere fraction of what it was.

We're making progress on out-of-country. Their goal is to introduce two-tier health care in Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question. The member for Beaches—East York.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, leave the clock going.

The honourable member knows the rules very clearly. If he's dissatisfied with an answer, he can call for a late show with the appropriate form being filed.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

A key component of the McGuinty government's 2007 platform was poverty reduction. Specific action to reduce poverty was part of the 2007 throne speech, but to date almost nothing has happened except consultations. Moreover, yesterday's throne speech did not outline a focused strategy or set commitments to reduce poverty—not a single word. The Toronto Star called this virtual silence "disappointing."

My question: Has the government abandoned its election promise and its throne speech commitment of 2007 to implement a poverty reduction strategy?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's a great question, because of course this government has been very engaged since day one in poverty reduction. I think that I heard it mentioned also in the throne speech yesterday, so perhaps we were not at the same event, but I heard it.

This government has been very active. We have increased social assistance by 11% since we came to power. We raised the minimum wage to \$10.25 on March 1. We have created a poverty cabinet committee. We have fully implemented the OCB; it's up to \$1,100 annually. We have introduced the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: This is the same minister who informed the House last week that they are looking at cutting off the special diet allowances.

Economic growth alone does not reduce poverty, and that's all you talked about yesterday. Yesterday's throne speech said nothing about affordable housing or about improving income security or about job security or access to child care—not a single word. Instead, it passed the buck, as this government is very good at doing, to the federal government and the poor community volunteers.

Will this government make the necessary investments in the upcoming budget to achieve its poverty reduction targets: yes or no?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, I don't think that this government has to take any lessons from that party. We have done a lot to reduce poverty and we will continue to do so. Every ministry has done something to help poverty in Ontario, including the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. Now the kids at age four and five will go to school, so it will help to identify those who need more help.

Again, we have increased social assistance. We have created this poverty cabinet committee. And in my ministry, I have appointed Gail Nyberg to help us to review the social system in Ontario. I'm very pleased to know that these people who have been—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is also for the Minister of Community and Social Services. With International Women's Day yesterday, I wish to raise the plight of women and children fleeing violence in my community and sadly in communities everywhere.

Many constituents of mine in Ottawa Centre have approached me with concerns for these individuals and families. Even though we are facing difficult economic times as a government, I feel very strongly that we need to provide support to those who need it, when they need it, as well as have the right to safety and security in our own community.

Will the minister share with my constituents what we have done in Ottawa Centre to help support women and their children who are victims of violence?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you for this question. I know the member from Ottawa Centre is very engaged in reducing violence against women.

I'm very proud to tell the member from Ottawa Centre that this government recently announced that we are

providing more than \$3 million to Interval House of Ottawa to construct a 25-bed women's shelter, providing jobs and building a stronger community foundation. At Interval House, these funds will support a new shelter to replace the existing facility. The new facility will offer expanded accessible services and enhancements to support Ottawa-area women and their children fleeing domestic violence.

I'm very happy to say that since 2003, funding for the violence against women program in the city of Ottawa has almost doubled. Furthermore, there are currently 123 emergency shelter beds available—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: As I mentioned previously, the safety of women and their children is a concern that is not isolated only to my riding or my city, but unfortunately across the province and beyond. Women have a fundamental right to enjoy safety and security in their own homes, but sometimes their homes simply cannot be a place of refuge for a threatened woman. This government must do what it can to help those fleeing violence, allowing women and children to remove themselves from harm and into a safe environment.

I would like to know how this government is improving services for women and families facing violence across Ontario.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will redirect this question to the minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for his advocacy on this important issue and the work that he does with Crime Prevention Ottawa and so many groups who work hard in partnership with government to ensure that women and their children can be safe in their homes, in their communities, in their workplace.

This has been an issue of utmost importance to our government. We have invested more than \$208 million to protect women from violence and support victims of abuse. That includes our \$87-million domestic violence action plan.

More than 15,000 front-line professionals and service providers have been trained to detect domestic violence and support victims. We've strengthened our response in the justice system. We've made improvements in our family law courtrooms. We've helped women gain economic independence, with more than 1,200 abused or at-risk women receiving job training—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. On page 4 of the 2007 McGuinty throne speech, the government said, "To ensure it is more affordable, your government will deliver a new textbook and technology grant of \$300 for

university and college students to help them get started each year at school."

Minister, why did you say each student would receive a grant of \$300 when no students have received such a thing?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very, very proud of our government's investments in post-secondary education. Since the introduction of the Reaching Higher plan, we've invested over \$6.2 billion, including \$1.5 billion to student aid. Part of that is an investment in the textbook and technology grant to every student who is eligible for OSAP.

1110

The member is correct: Our ambitious plan was \$300 a year, and because of financial circumstances we had to curb that. But students are still receiving an additional \$150 a year. I'd remind the honourable member of what happened when he was in office. He allowed tuition to go up by 71%, he cut student aid by 41% and he cut funding to institutions by \$435 million.

Yesterday, in our speech from the throne, we talked about further investments in post-secondary education because, unlike the party opposite, we recognize—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will come to order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Minister, the grant promise was very clear; it was made three years ago. But it has become another case where Dalton McGuinty finds it is easier to make up new promises rather than to deliver on the old ones.

You said every college and university student would qualify for this program, but very few are actually getting the money, and they're getting half the money you promised. With great fanfare, it was a key plank in your 2007 throne speech, and within a few months after that throne speech you threw the promise right out and didn't keep it. A lot of students voted for you because they liked that promise. The fact of the matter is that you just make up things as you go along.

I ask you, why should Ontario students believe your big promise to expand spaces for international enrolment when you can't even deliver on your little promise to expand this grant program?

Hon. John Milloy: We've doubled investment in student aid since 2003. Hundreds of thousands of students have benefited from our dramatic increases in student assistance, and every OSAP-eligible student in this province receives the textbook and technology grant.

The facts are clear: We have a balanced approach over here. We have invested more in our institutions, and we have invested more in student assistance. That's a balanced approach. When that honourable member was in power, they had a balanced approach, too: They cut funding to institutions, and they cut assistance to students.

The fact of the matter is that we have a plan for the future—20,000 more spaces—and all we have heard from that party is a brand new logo. Maybe they should be focusing less on a new logo and more on a plan for post-secondary education in the province of Ontario.

PENSION REFORM

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Pension plan members at Nortel, Abitibi-Bowater and many other plans want me to ask why there was not one mention of pensions in the throne speech. Does this mean: (1) that there will be no Ontario pension agency to provide a home for stranded pensions, such as those at Nortel and AbitibiBowater? (2) that you will not increase to \$2,500 dollars the monthly benefit guarantee under the pension benefits guarantee fund, as recommended by Mr. Harry Arthurs? (3) that pension reform in Ontario is dead?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We just dealt with the Nortel pension, and that member and his party spoke against it at the time. They criticized us for dealing with it. No, there's a lot going on.

The member is right: We have a bill before the House today dealing with the first range of pension changes on defined benefit plans. I will be participating on behalf of Ontario at the next meeting of finance ministers. We began and the federal government is beginning a series of consultations this week. We began ours two years ago.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: We called for it.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We called for it. The Council of the Federation will be dealing with it.

The member is right. He speaks of Professor Arthurs's recommendation; what he hasn't told workers is that Professor Arthurs also says that that form of insurance has to be paid for, and that's an important issue. The NDP is never done pandering. They'll tell anybody what they want to hear without having what I would call a meaningful discussion about how we're going to pay for these things.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: That's a classic.

There is another group that looked for signs in the throne speech that pension reform in this province is still alive: 65%—that is over four million Ontarians—who have no workplace pension whatsoever.

The NDP has proposed a well-received Ontario retirement plan that would allow every working Ontarian to retire with dignity and security. Does the fact that there was not one mention of pensions in the throne speech mean that the Liberal government will continue to ignore the four million hard-working Ontarians who have no pension coverage whatsoever?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, it doesn't. In fact, this party has been engaging in very meaningful dialogue. As I indicated to the member and his party opposite, we welcome their participation in the discussion. There is much to do. There has to be what I would call a full discussion about the challenges associated with this. For

instance, their plan, which looks similar to an RRSP plan, only run by the government, doesn't address the question that close to \$90 billion in unused RRSP room is out there; that is, people haven't been contributing. So they don't deal with that fundamental question, which is important. That's not to diminish the importance of looking at options like what the NDP has put forward. I think it's a very realistic view. It's certainly more than doing a new logo. We look forward to a robust discussion with all Ontarians as we move forward, and we'll have more to say about pensions and these matters in the coming days and weeks.

HEALTH PROMOTION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is to the Minister of Health Promotion.

On January 25th of this year, the Heart and Stroke Foundation's 2010 annual report on Canadians' health warned that a perfect storm of risk factors and demographic changes are converging to create an unprecedented burden on Ontario's system of cardiovascular care. No Ontarian, young or old, will be left unaffected. Clearly, the face of heart disease is changing. Young adults, women, baby boomers, and ethnocultural and aboriginal peoples now comprise the new heart disease demographic.

Minister, what is the government of Ontario doing to address these alarming trends? How will Ontario weather the storm?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleague, the member from Guelph, for all her hard work and for the question as well. I want to thank the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario for their research and advice on cardiovascular disease. We are grateful to count them among our partners in prevention.

The McGuinty government is working with a wide variety of community-based partners, including the Heart and Stroke Foundation, on several strategies targeted at high-risk populations. In 2009-10, we are investing \$6.6 million in aboriginal-specific health promotion programming. Our EatRight Ontario service provides free nutrition and healthy eating advice by registered dietitians online or by telephone. Our healthy communities fund invests in local communities to promote physical activity and healthy eating, particularly—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: The Heart and Stroke Foundation's report also touched on a topic that is near and dear to all of our hearts: the health of our children. The foundation's Spark Together for Healthy Kids campaign points out that 28% of Ontario kids are overweight and obese, an alarming trend that will have grave consequences for our already overburdened health care system.

What is the government doing to promote healthy food choices and physical activity for our children and their families?

Hon. Margaret R. Bech: We know that clearly it is essential that we must all work together in combat. Certainly, there's a role for government. However, government cannot do it alone. Parents, schools and everyone are an important role to play in building positive habits in our children and in making gains in the fight against obesity.

This year we are spending \$20.5 million to support various sports in Alberta to increase opportunities for youth to get involved in sports and physical activities in their communities. The government now mandates 20 minutes of physical activity and requires teacher-led classes in schools. As part of our Alberta poverty reduction strategy, we have rolled out Alberta's after-school initiative, a program for children and youth in priority communities that provides physical activity, nutrition and wellness programs. Our government has committed \$74.5 million.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Paterson): Thank you, Mrs. Bech.

END

SENIORS HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Elizabeth Wimmer: My question is for the Minister of Health, Winston. Despite the Liberal promises, there are growing concerns in the province that the needs of seniors are simply not being addressed. People are calling and coming to our offices—family and personal. There is no place for our seniors to go.

We're now in the third year of the four-year aging-at-home strategy. The wait-list for long-term-care really is increasing, and there is no community care support. Today, there are 26,000 people waiting for a long-term-care bed. Compared that to 12,000 in 1992.

I ask you today: What do you say to the seniors who are desperate and the families who are even more so about the long-term-care need and community care support need?

Hon. Deborah Whitham: I welcome the question. I ask about some of the improvements that we're making to health care, especially for our seniors.

I just want to take the opportunity to correct a rather remarkable statement in the press release of the Conservative Party after the three-point bid and that we have not put a single shovel in the ground or cut a ribbon when it comes to long-term-care issues. I simply can't read that. What I'd like to be able to do right now is to ask about the long-term-care issues that have opened.

The Thunder Bay Senior Care Centre in Brandon has opened 52 beds. AIN Inc. in Treaty has opened 100. Lower Ridge Place in Toronto has opened 50. Three Valley Lodge in Ontario has opened 12. Bradford Village in Bradford—and I'm sure your colleagues from that house would be happy to tell you about this particular long-term-care issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Paterson): Thank you, Mrs. Wimmer.

Mrs. Elizabeth Wimmer: Again to the Minister of Health. Any number that you've not mentioned are

really significant when we have a wait-list of 26,000 people that has grown from 12,000. You've now had over six years to address the need.

I want to tell you about a woman in my riding. She's 65. She had an aneurysm and she had a stroke. She was ready to leave the hospital but there was no long-term-care bed available for at least six months, and now she's 71 and in that hospital. About 17% of all the other hospital beds in the province are currently occupied by people like Louise, alternative-level-of-care patients who have nowhere to go.

Minister, will you I ask you know that it isn't a home-like environment. There's no respect, there's no privacy, there's no dignity. I ask you today, what are you going to do for this aging population?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Paterson): Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Deborah Whitham: There is nothing in the member opposite's question that I actually don't agree with. We need it in better when it comes to providing better care for those in our hospitals who do not need to be in our hospital.

But in fairness, when the Conservative Party was in office, they cut the home care services that seniors depend on by a 27% cut in funding and a 30% cut in home nursing services between the years 1995 and 1998. In the recent election, there was no aging-at-home strategy at all.

There is more good news coming for people across the province when it comes to long-term care. The Homewood Care in London is opening 100 beds, the Greater Home Development Society in Toronto is opening 60 beds, people here in London, another 160 beds, the Woodland Hospital in Toronto, 100 beds, Central Ontario at the Thames is—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Paterson): Thank you, Mrs. Whitham.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mrs. Sandra Horvath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Why does the Mulroney government's five-year plan ignore women?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, there are a range of programs that are designed to help women. First of all, my colleague opposite mentions women are part of the economy, an important part of the economy. There are for the many women who aren't working today who we want to help get a job. I believe women will work in the new clean energy economy. Hopefully, women will work in equal proportion to men, and hopefully they'll be paid equally to men.

I think women will work in the clean water industry. I think women are about clean water for their communities and for their children, whether it's a farm community or a city. I believe women are passionately about that. I think women are passionately about the Decade child benefit, which that member and her party voted against. Every part of this plan is about women. It's

about a better economy. It's about a better economy for their children and their grandchildren. In fact, they benefit—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government delivered a throne speech on International Women's Day with no mention of what they are going to do to help women through these tough economic times, a throne speech that failed to address the 22,000 child care spaces across Ontario that are on the chopping block, a throne speech that ignored the continuing wage disparity between women and men, a throne speech that made no mention whatsoever of improving home care and long-term care, of which women—we know—are the primary caregivers.

As women across Ontario continue to fight for social and economic equality, why is the McGuinty government turning its back on them?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think women care about the fact that we're introducing full-day learning, and that is being introduced at a time when the economy is struggling. I think women care a lot that more than 800,000 Ontario families now have a family doctor. I think mothers and grandmothers and sisters care about that. I think women will prosper from our investments in the clean economy—clean energy and clean water. Women care passionately about the poor, and that's why we brought in the Ontario child benefit, a plan that will help single moms, will help mothers who are struggling get better, which that member and her party voted against.

This government has laid out a plan that benefits children, that benefits women, that benefits our visible minorities and that benefits new Canadians. It's about all Ontarians, about building a bigger, better and stronger Ontario because, as the Premier says, working together, we're much better than when we work apart—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. David Oraziatti: My question is to the Attorney General and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Minister, residents in the communities of Garden River First Nation and the Batchewana First Nation near Sault Ste. Marie, like all Ontarians, have been affected by the current economic crisis. I have met with both Chief Lyle Sayers and Chief Dean Sayers on economic development projects, the proposed harmonized sales tax and other issues as well. I understand that they have written to the Ontario government regarding their concerns.

Minister, I understand that you have met with them as well. Can you please tell me what action we are taking to address the concerns of the Batchewana First Nation and the Garden River First Nation?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like to thank the member for the work that he's been doing with both Dean Sayers, of Batchewana First Nation, and Lyle

Sayers, of Garden River First Nation—enormously important. Where we start is a changed relationship. Premier McGuinty has made it a signal point of our government to change the historical relationship with First Nations and aboriginal people by determining to work co-operatively, in consultation on projects such as economic development, such as social development, such as the land claims issues and historical obligations of Ontario to our First Nations and aboriginal peoples.

We have, through the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, just over the past couple of years, put millions of dollars into capacity building, specifically to ensure that First Nations have the capacity and the ability to deal in a more productive and consultative way and in terms of economic development—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. David Oraziatti: Minister, residents of both area First Nations have also expressed concerns about the potential impact of the HST—specifically, that they may lose their current point-of-sale exemption that Ontario continues to support. Recently, a federal Conservative member from the Kenora region was in Sault Ste. Marie and said the responsibility for the impact of the tax on the Anishinabek communities lies squarely on the shoulders of the Ontario government.

Minister, given that the federal government has the responsibility for administering the tax, what steps has our government taken to retain the point-of-sale tax exemption for First Nations when the harmonized sales tax comes into effect July 1, 2010?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: My colleague is absolutely right. The federal government administers and will administer the harmonized sales tax. They have the responsibility for ensuring its administration. When I met with both Dean Sayers and Lyle Sayers of the two First Nations communities, they made the point—and I confirm the point—that we stand together with our First Nations in being determined to ensure that our historical Ontario approach to the point-of-sale exemption for the PST portion of the new harmonized tax will continue. We stand together with them—absolutely. We have written to the federal government, we have received correspondence from the Prime Minister and we are now working with our First Nations to obtain the information necessary to ensure that Ontario's historical recognition for First Nations point-of-sale exemption will continue—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1130

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Dalton McGuinty talks about the Ring of Fire more than the Man in Black ever did, but really, the Premier is a man who is keeping Ontario in the red. Do you have an actual plan for mining

or will you surprise the chromite miners with a new tax, just as you did with the diamond miners?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. Certainly there is a tremendous amount of excitement in northern Ontario related to the economic potential of the Ring of Fire. I can tell you that northerners are very excited that it is part of our Open Ontario plan.

The potential for this site is quite remarkable. We're looking at thousands of jobs—thousands of direct jobs and thousands of indirect jobs. But we recognize that, indeed, in order for us to make this project move forward we need to do it the right way, which is why our ministry is working very closely with the mining companies, the First Nation communities and with northerners in general to make sure we move forward. In fact, our ministry officials brought the mining companies up to Webequie and Martin Falls First Nations a couple of weeks ago. I'll be going up there myself to visit a number of communities next week.

We recognize that in order for this to succeed, it needs to be done right. But no matter what, it's an extraordinarily exciting development; we'd love to have you onside with us. This has got great potential in northern Ontario, one of the greatest finds in over a century—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Dalton McGuinty said in his throne speech, "There is no substitute for chromite," but the Liberals' Bill 191 cuts off 50% of all of Ontario's rich, northern resources from any and all development whatsoever. This government is nothing but a walking contradiction—actually, a sitting contradiction is more appropriate.

The Premier is right to think that the resource sector is important to Ontario's future, so will you commit, Minister, to developing those resources wherever they are in the north regardless of Bill 191?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We are very committed and very excited about the opportunities that are presented by the Ring of Fire, the opportunities that will bring economic potential and fabulous jobs all across northern Ontario.

It's very important to point out as well that, indeed, the actual site we're looking at is a relatively small site in terms of the Far North. We're working very closely with all the First Nations to make sure we move forward. In fact, this morning I was at a Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada convention and witnessed the signing, along with my colleague Minister Jeffrey, of four First Nations who want to collaborate with us and their First Nation community partners to move this project forward.

We are developing a plan, we are working closely with them and we are committed to having this work. The Premier, of course, is very committed to it. We are excited about this; we just wish you were. We'd love to have your support. This is a tremendous opportunity for all of northern Ontario. We want to move forward to provide the jobs this great project can do.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Yesterday's throne speech did, indeed, trumpet the mining potential of the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario, but my question is this: Can the minister explain why two of the six First Nations located closest to the Ring of Fire are continuing to conduct a blockade at the ice landing strips meant to service the mining industry? While the government is trumpeting this, why are the two First Nations who live closest to this and whose traditional lands are concerned, in fact, blockading and protesting one of the very things that your ministry and your government has approved?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. I think it's important to point out that, indeed, there is no real argument in the fact that everyone does see the potential of this. Certainly, the First Nations communities very much see the economic benefits that can come to their communities. I think they want to make sure that indeed they do accrue those benefits. The discussions that are going on between our ministry, the First Nations and the mining companies are very important. Even with the situation that's happening right now, we're working on it on a daily basis, in discussions.

Again, it's probably important to point out that the issues that are going on are really about how the First Nations communities can properly benefit from this great opportunity, which is why we tend to see this as a wonderful chance for us—our ministry and our government in terms of the Open Ontario plan—to work with them on this. That's why I'm going up to the communities next week. I'm looking forward to being in Marten Falls, Webequie and other communities as well.

We are going to continue to work with them closely, help the mining companies better understand the need to work with them so that this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I did not hear an answer. At the same time that the McGuinty government boasts, the two First Nations who live immediately adjacent to the Ring of Fire are in fact, in 20-, 30-below weather, conducting a blockade of an airstrip that you approved.

But it's not just those First Nations. Kasabonika Lake First Nation has dozens of members of their community who are trained in prospecting and mining exploration. How many of those people are being employed by the companies who are interested in the Ring of Fire? Zero.

Eabametoong First Nation hears over the news that a company is considering building a 400-kilometre railway through their traditional territory. Any consultation or discussion with the First Nation? None.

My question is this: Did the McGuinty Liberals learn anything from the debacle you created between Platinex and Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation? It doesn't seem so, because you seem to be on the same road here.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: There is no question that the First Nations involved have real concerns about making

sure that they are able to benefit from the huge economic potential of this project, and we're working with them to see this happens.

The important thing is that all parties are working towards a resolution of the issues right now. There's a distinct difference between the situation you described in terms of KI and Platinex. That was about a community that didn't want to have development in their area. Obviously, we worked to resolve their concerns as well.

The very significant and positive difference is, this is about communities that want to be sure that the economic development that may come from this fabulous deposit of chromite does accrue appropriately to their community. That's why we're working with them, I say to the member. That's why we're making sure our ministry officials work with the mining companies to see that those benefits do accrue.

This is important for all of northern Ontario, all the First Nations communities, and we are going to continue to work with them. I'm looking forward to having the opportunity of being up there myself, to work with them closely.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I need to correct the record. The minimum wage will increase on March 31, not March 1. The OCB is now up to 11%, but it's going to be fully implemented by—

Interjection.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Right now, it's \$1,100 per child per year and it's going to go up to \$1,300 by 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask all members to join me in welcoming to the Speaker's gallery Gilles Morin, the member from Carleton East, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments, as well as Deputy Speaker from 1990 to 1997. Welcome back to the Legislature, Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

APOLOGY

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Mr. Speaker, first, I want to apologize to you for my actions of November 30 through December 2, 2009. I have the utmost respect for the way you do your job, and I appreciate how well you treated me when I served as an independent member in the Legislature. I also want to apologize to your staff, including the clerks and security guards, for any inconvenience I may have caused them.

But I have no regret for doing my job—for calling a spade a spade. Throughout my 30 years in elected office, I have always believed in the importance of exercising one of our basic freedoms, the freedom of speech. I have every intention of continuing to voice my opinion, because I believe it is of the utmost importance to represent my community, to stand for the people who, by electing me, placed their faith in me to carry their concerns to Queen's Park.

In my view, a government that's a government of the people, by the people, for the people should be applauded because they are so confident in their leadership, so certain of their direction, that they allow members to think, to vote, to react, to represent and to call a spade a spade when necessary.

But these are truly cynical times in Ontario politics.

In yesterday's throne speech, this government talked about its five-year plan. Let's talk about the government's last-six-years plan that turned Ontario into a have-not province, saddled it with the largest deficit in its history, a whopping \$25 billion, and saddled Ontarians with the two largest tax hikes. God help us if we have to put up with another five years of this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity to thank the honourable member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for the apology.

MANITOUWADGE SKI HILL

Mr. Michael A. Brown: About three years ago, the township of Manitouwadge made an application to the municipal infrastructure investment initiative of the government of Ontario. Prior to making the application, Randy Mattson, Ed Hedderson and I discussed the project and visited the site. The happy news arrived: As one of the 22 projects approved in the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, the project for Manitouwadge was given the green light.

I had the privilege of accompanying town councillors to Manitouwadge Public School, where we announced to the grade 5 class of Mr. Othello Jones, the famous OJ, that 750,000 provincial dollars were to be allocated to the upgrading of the ski hill.

Three weeks ago, I was pleased and excited to visit the upgraded Kiwissa Ski Centre, which features a number of improvements, including the only snow-making equipment in the area. The addition of the equipment has allowed the hill to open in early December and provide amazing skiing throughout the winter, despite a lack of snow in the area.

I returned last Friday to the classroom of Mr. Jones to close the loop. I had had a large photograph presented to me, including many of the students who were now in Mr. Jones's grade 5 class.

I want to congratulate all those who were involved in this exciting project. I want to convey a special thank you to the ski hill operator, Dave Jung, for his outstanding work. It's truly an amazing facility.

APOLOGY

Mr. Randy Hillier: A government's majority status is neither a reason nor an excuse for them to abuse their position and disregard dissenting voices. Even a majority government must respect their mandate and the people.

Last December, I was suspended because I protested the arbitrary imposition of Dalton's new sales tax. I had asked the government for public consultation, and I was rebuked.

I would like to reiterate my devotion to the institution of this Legislature, for which I have the highest regard. I sincerely apologize that my protest put me at odds with both this institution and your Chair.

But I will not hesitate to defend either my constituents or my convictions, should the need arise. This institution does not stand on stones and mortar nor party discipline; it stands upon independent thought, honest convictions and the passion to protect the people's freedom and whose integrity is the foundation of Canadian democracy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington for his apology.

INCONTINENCE

Mr. Peter Kormos: Without experiencing incontinence and the issues related to it, it's hard for any of us to even begin to imagine the impact that it has on a person's life. Yet most adults past the age of 65 suffer incontinence at some level. That's not to say that it's restricted only to seniors, but seniors are the largest community of people who live with incontinence. Regrettably, of people affected, only 30% or so even discuss it with their doctors.

Seniors living on fixed incomes, many of them below the poverty line, simply can't afford the \$1,000 to \$3,000 a year that it costs to provide oneself with incontinence products.

If you lived down in Niagara, you'd know Jack O'Neil of Port Colborne. He's a senior, and he has been a seniors' advocate for a long time, as one of the founding members of the Niagara Gatekeepers. He has been writing to the Minister of Health since 2004 asking for funding to assist seniors with incontinence products.

There is still no funding through OHIP, assistive devices or even Trillium, and there was no mention of it in the throne speech. I say it's time. The tenacity of Jack O'Neil should be given credit—for saying it's time that this government support those seniors living with incontinence.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to congratulate the Oakville community on their recent recognition by the Ontario Heritage Trust.

The town of Oakville received the 2009 Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for their outstanding

and sustained efforts in municipal heritage conservation. Town council has designated 10 properties for preservation since 2007. Last year, Oakville added an incredible 350 properties to the heritage register.

Former mayor Harry Barrett received the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement for supporting Oakville's heritage for more than 55 years.

Many additional Oakville residents were also recognized by the Ontario Heritage Trust, including: Francine Landry and Andy Bruce for their support of Oakville's heritage, Fred Hayward for his dedication in honouring Oakville's cultural heritage, Liz Benneian for her ongoing commitment to preserving Oakville's natural heritage, young Clayton Trovato for his advocacy for the continued protection of the Smith's old stone farmhouses, and Pam Calvert's grade 10 enhanced Canadian history class at Oakville Trafalgar High School for their Oakville Trafalgar grade 10 Great War project.

I'd like to congratulate each award winner on this recognition. I'd like to thank them for their dedication to the community, in protecting and promoting Oakville's rich and varied heritage for all future generations.

MIDWIFERY CLINIC

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today and congratulate Linda Stahl and Stephanie McDonnell on the opening of their midwifery clinic this afternoon at the Headwaters Health Care Centre. Linda and Stephanie have been working very hard over the past two years to establish this clinic in the community.

The midwifery clinic responds to the needs of families who have been travelling to Mississauga, Alliston and Guelph to receive the services of a midwife.

1510

Midwives play an important role in providing care for families before and after the birth of their child. They provide prenatal care, can order blood work and ultrasounds, provide birthing care and monitor the health of mother and child for up to six weeks after birth. Their clinic will free up family doctors to perform non-obstetrical procedures, and since our community has been designated as an underserved area, the midwifery program is a welcome addition to ease the burden on our family physicians.

As Dufferin—Caledon continues to grow and more young families settle here, the midwifery program at Headwaters Health Care Centre will be a welcome addition. I want to thank Linda and Stephanie for all of their hard work to establish a clinic in our community.

PAKISTAN DAY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Last Saturday, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Dr. Eric Hoskins, and I had the pleasure of attending a Pakistan Day event in Ottawa. The event was organized by the Canada Pakistan Association of the National Capital Region.

The event was entitled Journey to Pakistan, and what a journey that was. With dances, a fashion show demonstrating different colours and clothing, and a very impressive video presentation, the organizers really portrayed the rich value of the Pakistani culture and what it means for our Canadian society.

In addition, the event recognized some distinguished Pakistani Canadians who have given back to the community. In particular, an award was given to Mr. Mohammed Azhar Ali Khan, who is a well-known community leader in Ottawa and a recipient of the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario; also, Dr. M. Husain Sadar, who is a leading expert in environmental and human health. It was really good to see those two gentlemen being recognized.

I want to extend my deepest congratulations to Ms. Lubna Syed, who is the president of the association, and their executive for the hard work they did in organizing this very impressive event. A special thanks to the two masters of ceremonies, Mr. Javed Soomra and Ms. Sana Syed, who did an incredible job of engaging the audience.

There were hundreds of people who attended the event and it was a great showcase of Pakistani-Canadian culture.

PROVINCIAL FRANCOPHONE YOUTH PARLIAMENT

PARLEMENT JEUNESSE FRANCOPHONE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Tomorrow, 60 students from 39 French-language high schools will descend on Queen's Park for a mock parliament. This year marks the fourth annual Parlement jeunesse francophone de l'Ontario. The participants from all corners of the province are ready to assume their roles as MPPs, journalists, or NGO representatives.

Il me fait plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue aux élèves, aux enseignants et aux animateurs et animatrices de la Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne. Un des objectifs de ce Parlement jeunesse est de permettre aux élèves d'exprimer des opinions et de défendre une position, tout en développant leur capacité de leadership.

Je tiens à remercier Thérèse Nadeau du ministère de l'Éducation, Magalie-France Houle de l'équipe FESFO, ainsi que Christine Pelletier de mon bureau, pour leurs efforts au succès de ce projet.

Ce Parlement jeunesse francophone est une des meilleures façons d'assurer la relève en politique. L'Ontario a besoin des jeunes énergétiques qui souhaitent se dévouer pour leur communauté.

I invite everyone in this chamber to join us at 9:05 tomorrow morning for a group photo on the grand staircase, followed by a reception in committee room 230. Please join us tomorrow morning to welcome this year's PJFO students.

ARTEM OTCHAKOVSKI

Ms. M. Aileen Carroll: It is with great sorrow that I speak today about the death of a 36-year-old officer, a police officer who resided in the city of Barrie with his wife and his son.

Constable Artem—James—Otchakovski served with courage and dedication with the Peel Regional Police. He helped to make that community a safer place in which to live.

But his service to that community was ended by a terrible tragedy on March 1. The constable was responding to a non-emergency call to assist another police officer when a car accident occurred, resulting in his death.

This is the very first time in 25 years that a Peel Regional Police officer has lost his life while on duty, and it is a tragedy that has greatly impacted that community.

The funeral services are taking place this afternoon. I would like to convey my sympathy and condolences to the family, his friends and his colleagues, those friends of Constable Otchakovski who are joining us today to honour his life and his service both to that community and to this province.

Perhaps it would be appropriate to stand for a moment of silence as we join those who are at the funeral service this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members to join us in tribute to our fallen police officer.

The House observed a moment's silence.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry concerning northern Ontario's Ring of Fire. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MENINGITIS AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DE LA SENSIBILISATION À LA MÉNINGITE

Ms. Pendergast moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to proclaim April 24 in each year as Meningitis Awareness Day/ Projet de loi 2, Loi proclamant le 24 avril de chaque année Jour de la sensibilisation à la méningite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Proclaiming April 24 as Meningitis Awareness Day in Ontario supports the work and efforts of the Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada by heightening awareness of meningitis and dedicating a day to sharing best practices, information and research that are all essential to ensuring that no family loses a loved one to this disease.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding committee membership.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

On the Standing Committee on Estimates, Mr. Ramal be replaced by Ms. Mangat;

On the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Mr. Hoskins be replaced by Mr. Murray;

On the Standing Committee on General Government, Ms. Mangat be replaced by Mr. Levac;

On the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, Mr. Johnson be replaced by Ms. Cansfield and Mr. Naqvi be replaced by Ms. Carroll;

On the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Mr. Leal be replaced by Mr. Colle and Mr. Levac be replaced by Mr. Moridi;

On the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Brownell be replaced by Mr. Sergio, Mr. Johnson be replaced by Ms. Mangat and Mr. Ramal be replaced by Mr. Naqvi;

On the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Mr. McNeely be replaced by Ms. Carroll;

On the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, Mr. Balkissoon be replaced by Mr. Rinaldi, Mr. Colle be replaced by Mr. Leal and Mr. Sergio be replaced by Mr. Caplan;

On the Standing Committee on Social Policy, Ms. Aggelonitis be replaced by Mr. Ramal, Ms. Jeffrey be replaced by Mr. Johnson and Ms. Mitchell be replaced by Mr. McMeekin.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.
1520

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Ms. Pendergast and Ms. Van Bommel exchange places in order of precedence such that Ms. Pendergast assumes ballot item number 1 and Ms. Van Bommel assumes ballot item number 44; and Mr. Berardinetti, Mr. Flynn and Ms. Albanese exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Berardinetti assumes ballot item number 3, Mr. Flynn assumes ballot item number 13 and Ms. Albanese assumes ballot item number 64; and that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items numbers 1 and 3.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

"Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational" requirements "and is well known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area."

I agree with this petition, and I'll sign it.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas we currently have no psychiatric emergency service at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to support the creation of a psychiatric emergency service in emergency at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario."

I support this petition, and I will affix my signature to it.

RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY

Mr. Bill Murdoch: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas to cover the cost of reconstructive surgery when a patient has had extreme weight loss after bariatric surgery, as these surgeries are not covered under OHIP and are at present considered cosmetic;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That when patients have ... surgery and lose the required amount of weight and keep it off, they also have another set of health care issues that can be very costly to take care of. As these individuals lose weight, they end up with so much excess skin and fat pockets that no amount of exercise will take care of it. This excess skin and folds in the skin can cause anything from boils, cysts, skin infections and more that have to be cared for constantly in hospital emergency rooms and cared for by agencies like community care access centres. If preventative reconstructive surgeries are not approved, the constant medical care will cost the taxpayer much more money as said health issues would cost over time."

I've signed this, and I had this sent to me by Shelley Kennedy.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: This petition is from St. Matthew High School.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 2007 report, concluded that without dramatic reductions in human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, climate change may bring 'abrupt and irreversible effects on oceans, glaciers, land, coastlines and species;' and

"Whereas no one group, country or continent is responsible for climate change, but where all human beings are collectively responsible for solving the problem; and

"Whereas the production of greenhouse gases in Canada has increased by 27% over 1990 levels; and

"Whereas our elected leaders have a responsibility to report to the public on their actions with respect to halting climate change for the sake of accountability; and

"Whereas youth in particular have a special interest in this issue, being those that will inherit this earth, our only home.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario swiftly pass Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change."

The first three people on this are Nandean Wandji, Jamie Roelofs and Anna Abraszko. I submit this and sign it in support.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, on which I have thousands of signatures.

"Whereas residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I affix my signature as I agree with this petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have a petition here from the people of Thornhill addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's plan to blend the PST with the GST into one 13% harmonized sales tax represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"This new tax ... will raise the cost of a long list of goods and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax, including: electricity; home heating oil and gas at the pump; haircuts; ... Internet and cable; home renovations; heating; air conditioning repairs; accounting, legal and real estate fees; condo fees; new home sales; rents will also go up; minor hockey registration fees will increase; and green fees and gym fees will also be taxed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government not impose this new tax on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Sarah.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: I have a petition here from St. Matthew High School. Talyn Johnson, Maura Tubridy and Grace Boivin are the first three signatures on it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 2007 report, concluded that without dramatic reductions in human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, climate change may bring 'abrupt and irreversible effects on oceans, glaciers, land, coastlines and species;' and

"Whereas no one group, country or continent is responsible for climate change, but where all human beings are collectively responsible for solving the problem; and

"Whereas the production of greenhouse gases in Canada has increased by 27% over 1990 levels; and

"Whereas our elected leaders have a responsibility to report to the public on their actions with respect to halting climate change for the sake of accountability; and

"Whereas youth in particular have a special interest in this issue, being those that will inherit this earth, our only home.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario swiftly pass Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change."

I will put my signature on this and send this up with Max.

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Dufferin-Caledon do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships ... and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I am proud to affix my name to this petition and give it to page Colin.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It says:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's plan to blend the PST with the GST into one 13% harmonized sales tax represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"This new tax, which we are calling the DST (Dalton sales tax), will raise the cost of a long list of goods and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax, including"—but not excepting—"electricity; home heating oil and gas at the pump; haircuts; newspapers and magazines; Internet and cable; home renovations; heating and air conditioning repairs; accounting, legal and real estate fees; condo fees; new home sales; rents will also go up" to some extent; "minor hockey registration fees will increase; and green fees and gym fees will also be taxed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government not impose this new tax on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I agree with this, affix my signature to it and send it down with Rachael.

1530

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas several paramedics in Simcoe county had their pensions affected when paramedic services were transferred to the county of Simcoe, as their pensions were not transferred with them from HOOPP and OPTrust to OMERS, meaning they will receive significantly reduced pensions because their transfer did not recognize their years of continuous service; and

"Whereas when these paramedics started with their new employer, the county of Simcoe, their past pensionable years were not recognized because of existing pension legislation; and

"Whereas the government's own Expert Commission on Pensions has recommended that government move swiftly to address this issue; and

"Whereas the government should recognize this issue as a technicality and not penalize hard-working paramedics;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier McGuinty support Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's resolution that calls upon the government to address this issue immediately and ensure that any legislation or regulation allows paramedics in Simcoe county who were affected by the divestment of

paramedic services in the 1990s and beyond to transfer their pensions from HOOPP or OPTrust to OMERS.”

Obviously, I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 2007 report, concluded that without dramatic reductions in human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, climate change may bring ‘abrupt and irreversible effects on oceans, glaciers, land, coastlines and species;’ and

“Whereas no one group, country or continent is responsible for climate change, but where all human beings are collectively responsible for solving the problem; and

“Whereas the production of greenhouse gases in Canada has increased by 27% over 1990 levels; and

“Whereas our elected leaders have a responsibility to report to the public on their actions with respect to halting climate change for the sake of accountability; and

“Whereas youth in particular have a special interest in this issue, being those that will inherit this earth, our only home.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario swiftly pass Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change.”

The first three names on this petition are Keira Fletcher, Danielle Ricker and Tiana Cornfield, and it’s from St. Matthew High School. I support this petition and will send it up with Max.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

“Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

“Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people’s complaints about children’s aid societies’ decisions; and

“Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman’s office;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and

investigate complaints concerning the province’s children’s aid societies (CAS).”

I have signed this.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here that was given to me by Heidi Van Riesen from the great town of Tillsonburg, and I would like to present it on behalf of all the people who signed it.

“Whereas the residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty’s new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families.”

I’ll affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe–Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in a brand new tax on income that they inaccurately claimed was going to health care; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas at the pumps; home heating oil and electricity; postage stamps; haircuts; dry cleaning; home renovations; veterinary care; and arena ice and soccer field rentals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Monique M. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the second motion that I moved, regarding private members' public business, I misspoke. The last paragraph should read, "That, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items numbers 1, 2 and 3."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 9, 2010, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I plan to share my time with the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka and the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

It is an honour to stand in the House today and deliver my first response to a throne speech as leader of the official opposition.

Before I begin my response, I want to take a moment and extend my prayers and condolences and that of the entire PC caucus to the families of the two fallen police officers: Peel Regional Police officer Artem "James" Otchakovski and OPP Constable Vu Pham.

James Otchakovski was tragically killed in the line of duty last week and was laid to rest this afternoon. I know the Premier was in attendance. Garfield Dunlop, our

critic and a strong supporter of police in Ontario, was representing the Ontario PC caucus.

Tragically, yesterday Constable Vu Pham of the Ontario Provincial Police, a 37-year-old father of three, was shot and killed in the line of duty.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I want to extend our deepest sympathies to the families and colleagues of both officers. While these tragedies have brought deep sorrow and grief, their families can take solace in knowing that these men are heroes and made the ultimate sacrifice in the effort to keep our neighbourhoods and streets safe from harm. We are forever in their debt.

Applause.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I appreciate the kind response from all members of the assembly in all parties.

I'd now like to proceed with the beginning of the PC caucus response to the McGuinty government's throne speech, to the extent that one can offer a response to a speech that, quite frankly, failed to set out any plan to help Ontario families squeezed by job losses, higher taxes and reduced government programs; completely failed to set out a path to get Ontario's economy working again; and completely failed to address the growing dire fiscal status of the province of Ontario.

1540

This throne speech, after much buildup, was a great disappointment. One wonders how much farther Ontario needs to fall before the McGuinty government takes notice and takes action.

As I travel around this province and speak to Ontario families, small business owners and seniors, they simply cannot believe what has happened to the province of Ontario these past six years. Once the powerhouse of Confederation, the engine that drove this entire country, Ontario now has fallen to have-not status. Once a magnet for jobs and opportunity, we now have soaring unemployment. Once the home to the best schools, hospitals and roads, we now have crumbling infrastructure, growing waiting lists for cancer patients, growing lists for seniors trying to get into long-term-care homes—and in response, a growing industry of Dalton McGuinty US health care brokers.

But I guess, upon review, perhaps we shouldn't be surprised about the lack of new ideas and new direction in yesterday's throne speech, because if we look at the pattern of Dalton McGuinty's previous throne speeches, quite frankly, they're not worth the paper they're written on.

Speaker, do you remember back to the 2003 throne speech? In that speech, Dalton McGuinty promised to restrain spending, but it turned out to be a promise made and a promise broken. Government program spending, after six years, is now up some 65%, when the economy has grown at less than a tenth that rate.

In that very same throne speech, Dalton McGuinty also promised he would—you'll enjoy this—reduce the reliance on overpaid consultants: a promise made and a promise broken. We all saw hundreds of millions of dollars diverted to Liberal-friendly consultants like the

Courtyard Group, the Premier's former health adviser Karli Farrow and former campaign chair John Ronson through the eHealth, Cancer Care Ontario and now the local health integration networks, or the regional health bureaucracy, scandals.

The failure of the 2003 throne speech to keep promises was followed in kind by the 2005 throne speech in which Dalton McGuinty pledged a red tape reduction strategy: again, a promise made and a promise broken. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business now calculates that red tape is costing Ontario businesses more than \$11 billion per year. This has forced far too many small businesses to close their doors, has killed jobs and has chased entrepreneurs out of our province. The so-called Open for Business initiative has basically shuttered its doors.

In 2005, Dalton McGuinty also promised he would close the coal-fired plants, part of his campaign commitments as well. Initially, he said it would be by 2007. Then it became 2009, and then it became 2014. That takes some kind of work, to break a promise three consecutive times, but sadly, three times a promise made and a promise broken. Let's not forget how the self-righteous Dalton McGuinty once claimed that coal-fired plants contributed to 668 deaths a year, but now has postponed his promise three consecutive times.

This was followed by the 2007 throne speech, where Dalton McGuinty promised he would hire 9,000 more nurses and 70% would be full-time. The pattern continued: a promise made and a promise broken. Just ask the patients, seniors and families in places like Ottawa, London, Fort Erie or Port Colborne, who have seen services like ERs close down and nurses being laid off.

In 2007, Dalton McGuinty also promised to build 35,000 new long-term-care beds: a promise made and a promise broken. Now, with a waiting list of over 26,000 waiting for a space in a long-term-care home, not a single shovel has hit the ground to keep that promise, and hospitals in Ontario are now being forced to cancel surgeries due to overcapacity issues stemming from that bed shortage.

So I stand here and ponder the latest round of promises and wonder to what degree Dalton McGuinty's foreign students promise is actually a cash grab that will freeze more Ontario students out of Ontario's post-secondary institutions.

And I ask how Dalton McGuinty can commit to developing the Ring of Fire when his own Bill 191 already cripples resource and economic development in almost the entirety of the land north of the 51st parallel and after Dalton McGuinty increased taxes on diamond mining in the province of Ontario after the Victor mine opened.

And I wonder what foreign multinational corporation will follow in Samsung's footsteps and make a king's ransom, just like they did on the green energy plan, with the so-called clean water plan. If past behaviour is any indication of future performance, Dalton McGuinty's Ontario is in a lot more trouble than we would think.

I think what is most interesting is what was missing in the speech from the throne. There is no plan to address the deficit or the debt, there is no mention of Dalton McGuinty's next tax grab, and there is no mention of Dalton McGuinty's so-called super-corporation scheme.

First and foremost, there is no serious plan to address the deficit or debt. The McGuinty Liberals steered our province straight into the quicksand, and rather than grab a lifeline out, they have us sinking faster and deeper.

I bet most families don't know this yet, although they certainly will: Dalton McGuinty is on course to double the provincial debt by 2012-13. It took 23 Premiers 136 years to get us \$148 billion in debt, and Dalton McGuinty would single-handedly double that debt in just eight years' time—shameful record.

In the fall economic statement, Finance Minister Dwight Duncan confessed that the deficit was \$24.7 billion—\$24.7 billion. That's actually twice the size of the deficit Bob Rae left this province with, and \$24.7 billion is bigger than the deficits of all the other provinces combined. But guess how much attention the spiralling debt actually received in the throne speech?

Interjection: Three lines.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Three lines. My colleagues have read the throne speech exactly—three lines, 24 words, for a \$24.7-billion deficit.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A billion a word.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague is correct: That's more than \$1 billion per word. Newspaper headlines are longer than that. But I suspect there's good reason for this. Finance Minister Duncan admitted in his fall economic statement that the McGuinty Liberals had no plan to deal with the deficit, and now, seven months later, nothing has changed. They still have no plan and no intention of doing anything about it.

That makes us in the Ontario PC caucus and Ontario families rightly concerned about what new tax hikes and fee increases Dalton McGuinty still has planned for Ontario families. Again, look back to the 2003 throne speech. The McGuinty government failed to mention that they would impose the \$15-billion so-called health tax.

1550

They outlined in the throne speech their plan for the upcoming session, but it said nothing about their planned health tax that would hurt Ontario families and seniors and didn't even dedicate the money directly to the Ministry of Health. They conveniently left the single largest income tax increase in Ontario's history right out of the throne speech.

In 2005, the McGuinty government conveniently left out the fact that their plan for the city of Toronto included bestowing on David Miller massive new powers to tax. Today, Toronto families are forced to pay more for the privilege of owning a car or trying to buy a home, fees for their garbage and plastic bags and absolutely no mention of that whatsoever in the 2005 throne speech.

Of course, in 2007, the McGuinty Liberals failed to mention what would become the signature tax grab of their second term, the \$3-billion HST tax grab that's

going to kill jobs and take money out of the pockets of seniors and families in order to fuel this government's out-of-control spending.

So I am not surprised that there was nothing on tax increases in this throne speech, but the province is watching, the province is waiting, and Ontario families won't get fooled again.

Of course, there was nothing in the throne speech about the massive super-corporation, mega-corporation, or whatever they're going to call it. It has, no doubt, many Liberal consultants and insiders in an excited lather at the fees they can get out of this deal.

This is clearly a plan for off-book borrowing, plain and simple, all facilitated by the aggressive Wall Street banking firm Goldman Sachs, which was one of the key players in the international financial meltdown of a year or so ago.

I think we can understand why Dalton McGuinty likes this idea. It's going to provide him billions of new dollars to spend today to put a mortgage on our children and grandchildren tomorrow.

But I ask Ontario families: Can you trust Dalton McGuinty to spend this money wisely?

I can see why Liberal-friendly bankers, insiders and consultants are absolutely salivating at this idea. It means that even more Liberal friends are going to get rich at the public trough. The only people who lose when Dalton McGuinty goes on a fire sale of public assets are the everyday Ontario families who will see no benefit whatsoever from Dalton McGuinty mortgaging our provincial assets.

But that's no surprise. It has been a long time since ordinary families have been heard inside this government. The Ontario PC caucus will continue to stand on the side of hard-working Ontario families to oppose Dalton McGuinty's tax and runaway spending policies that have brought our province to the back of the pack.

Instead of big spending programs, the Ontario PC caucus, in their throne speech, would have brought about a plan focused on the most important issue in our province: jobs and the economy and helping working families succeed.

Our caucus has tried, and will continue to try, to get Dalton McGuinty to adopt our ideas to get Ontario's economy back on track and supply good, well-paying jobs for Ontario families today instead of handouts to multinational corporations, to lower the tax rate and red tape regulatory burden to help small businesses succeed and start hiring in Ontario again.

Let me give you some examples, and I hope the finance minister will take them up in his budget. I want to commend my colleague the finance critic from Parry Sound-Muskoka, the member from Thornhill and the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, who sat on the finance committee and put good ideas on the table that we hope to see in the upcoming budget.

For example, the Ontario PC caucus calls for an immediate payroll tax holiday—a tax that is a disincentive to hire. We want to see small business and business

hiring again, so spend the payroll taxes and let's get jobs moving in the province of Ontario once again.

We want to help Ontario families achieve that Canadian dream of home ownership. Quite frankly, with the manufacturing and auto sectors facing some challenging times, we need construction firing on all cylinders. That's why we're calling for a one-year suspension of the land transfer tax to put that dream of home ownership in the reach of young families and help generate new jobs in construction across our province.

I say to the Minister of Labour: We call on Dalton McGuinty to repeal his job-killing Bill 119, which drives up costs, requiring WSIB coverage for office and secretarial workers. That's going to hurt small businesses because they're taxing people who never set foot on a construction site. If the McGuinty government doesn't repeal that bill, an Ontario PC government will.

Small businesses from Niagara to Ottawa to Kenora are seeing more and more red tape piled on their backs. Ontario farmers are seeing their costs go up while they're competing with unfair subsidized competition from abroad that is driving their prices down. Dalton McGuinty's every cabinet meeting seems to roll out more and more red tape that's killing jobs and chasing entrepreneurs out of our province. That's why the Ontario PC caucus has called for a freeze on all new job-killing regulations and a return of a red tape commission to lower the regulatory burden in the province of Ontario.

Sadly, we're seeing so many young women and men who want to get involved in the trades moving out to Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. They're seeing a system that's not working for them. We need to get our system into the 21st century and out of the 1970s. That's why we'll continue to call for changing the three-to-one journeyman-to-apprentice ratio into a modern one-to-one ratio for the trades to help create jobs in the province of Ontario. We want to see those talented women and men given opportunities to practise their trades and raise their families in the province of Ontario rather than the other nine provinces.

Working with our critic for northern development, mines and forestry, Mr. Hillier, we have brought forward a northern jobs plan that would make it easier to pursue job-creating development projects on crown land in northern Ontario. In return, we would mandate that every dollar raised from that crown land development be reinvested into northern Ontario infrastructure to help create jobs today and create even more jobs in northern Ontario in the future.

We would take an entirely different course when it comes to Ontario's energy supply. We've always known a province of Ontario where reliable, affordable energy was a strength in this province that attracted jobs from around the world to Ontario because they could depend on a reliable, affordable energy supply. Dalton McGuinty's broken promises, based on the interests of special interests, have raised our rates to among the highest in competing states and provinces, closed down mills across northern Ontario, chased manufacturing jobs

out of southern Ontario and laid our economy low. Instead of pursuing pie-in-the-sky energy schemes like the sweetheart Samsung deal, we'd bring forward a plan for affordable, sustainable and emissions-free nuclear capacity in the province of Ontario to help move our province forward.

Lastly, we will continue to call for this Premier to lay off his habit of reckless spending increases and the creation of regional health bureaucracies that are taking dollars out of front-line care and to cap spending for 2010 at what he had projected he would spend in last year's budget. These massive, runaway-spending, running-up-the-debt policies that are mortgaging the future of our children and grandchildren need to stop today.

Our caucus will continue to bring forward good ideas to help stir job creation in the province of Ontario, to help Ontario families move forward, for businesses to grow and to make sure Ontario is restored to its rightful place as the economic powerhouse of this great nation. That's what the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party has always done, and we're the only party calling for a level playing field where everyone gets their fair chance. No more sweetheart handouts to well-placed corporations who hire the best lobbyists; let's give everyone in the province an equal chance to succeed, move up and create jobs in Ontario again.

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The Ontario PC Party is the only party calling for lower taxes and more private sector jobs. We are the only party serious about controlling the spending bloat that is driving up Ontario's debt and challenging our future. The Ontario PC caucus firmly believes that our best days are yet to come. There can be no doubt that even in these extraordinary economic times, we have all of the ingredients to not only just climb out of the recession, but to grow our economy, create jobs and be number one in Canada again.

Ontario has a strong entrepreneurial culture. We have a hard-working, dedicated, talented workforce. We have abundant natural resources, and we are within a day's drive of some 135 million consumers across the border in the US market. These are the forces that made Ontario great, and they will make Ontario great again. But sadly, the Dalton McGuinty government is out of ideas, out of gas and remarkably out of touch with the needs of hard-working Ontario families.

Friends, Ontario's best days still lie ahead. We just need the right decisions to turn our province around. When Dalton McGuinty has failed to provide those promises, to take advantage of the opportunities for our future of growth and job creation, we'll replace him, and the Ontario PC caucus will make Ontario the strongest province in Canada once again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to follow our leader in response to the speech from the throne delivered yesterday.

As I listened to the throne speech yesterday, I was making some notes. The first line that I put down was "Second Career"—they mentioned the Second Career program. The second comment that I made, and I think they were about halfway through the speech, was "fluff," because about a third of the speech was essentially fluff. As was noted in the *Toronto Star* by Thomas Walkom today, Monday's "platitude-laden throne speech was remarkably dull." I would say that you could see that in the faces of the government members watching it: They didn't seem to be too impressed.

Or, as Christina Blizzard noted, "It's Dalton in Wonderland." That was the headline for Christina Blizzard's article today, and I think that summarized the throne speech very well as well. Because we have a situation where we have the largest deficit in the history of the province, at \$24.7 billion. We have a situation where Dalton McGuinty's on track to double the debt of the province by 2012: \$140 billion when he came into power; we're looking at \$290 billion of debt by 2012. And yet, the Premier continues, the government continues with their tax-and-spend program that they've had the last number of years as if it's business as usual: "There's nothing to be concerned about. Everything's going just fine."

Then you see an article today in the *Globe and Mail* written by Boyd Erman quoting the former governor of the Bank of Canada, and you realize just how out in wonderland the government is, noting that they're talking about the debt and deficit. As our leader pointed out, in the throne speech there were some three lines dedicated to debt and deficit, some 24 words. So we note that Boyd Erman notes that, "That's a poor omen for a province that risks becoming the Greece"—he's comparing Ontario to Greece, and we know what's happening in Greece right now, where they have a huge crisis—"of Canada within a decade or two unless the provincial government can come up with and stick to a credible plan to reduce Ontario's deficit." I'm not going to read the whole article, but I'd like to summarize it a bit. "That's why the province's budget, expected later this month, has to address how to shrink a budget gap that is far larger than any other province's." So compared to the other provinces, as we've been pointing out, we're doing very poorly: "But to deal with what many economists—including former central bank Governor David Dodge—suggest is a significant 'structural' deficit that will persist and grow even when the economy fully rebounds."

"Mr. Dodge told a business audience in Toronto last week that Ontario's spending is outpacing revenue growth so quickly that the result will be a structural deficit equivalent to 3.5% of the province's economic output by 2020, even in good economic times."

There are some alarm bells there that the government seems to be completely oblivious to, because in yesterday's throne speech, they didn't address this situation at all. If anything, they just went on with more of the same: more promises of more spending. They seem completely unable or unwilling to deal with that situation.

We heard more promises in the throne speech. Our leader outlined some of the past promises that this government has made in former throne speeches. Again, I think the number went up, but they talked about jobs. Prior to yesterday's throne speech, they promised a million jobs. I think there were some more that were promised yesterday.

It's easy to promise jobs, but what have they delivered? In the past year, we've lost 140,000 jobs. Before the recession started in October 2008, we lost a couple of hundred thousand manufacturing jobs. The track record of this government is that it's great at saying things, great at promising things in throne speeches, but very poor at actually delivering them.

When you look back at the past PC government, the PC government of Mike Harris delivered one million new jobs. They said they were going to do it and they did it. That's something that the past PC government and Mike Harris can be very proud of. This government has promised a million jobs, and we've seen job losses.

In the throne speech yesterday, they talked about red tape reduction. As our leader pointed out, in the 2008 throne speech they made a commitment to reduce red tape, and what have we seen? They've got this Open for Business policy that's supposed to be reducing red tape, but I'd say to any of the members here: Go and talk to just about any business out there and ask them about how they feel about their burden of red tape, whether it has stayed the same or gotten worse. I know the Certified Management Accountants did a survey of their members; half of them said that it was the same; half said that it's worse. If you listen to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, they say the cost of red tape in Ontario is some \$11 billion. Once again, the government is good at making a commitment, but we haven't seen any evidence that they actually made a difference whatsoever.

The government talks about new possibilities for the economy in their throne speech. They talked about the Ring of Fire and the possibilities for northwestern Ontario, this new chromite discovery. That's certainly something to be very excited about, but then you look at their actual policies, and particularly their energy policies—the Green Energy Act. The one thing that I'm absolutely convinced about, the one thing that we can count on with the Green Energy Act, is higher electricity prices; there's absolutely no question. The government's buy at 80 cents a kilowatt hour and sell at six cents is going to drive the price of electricity up. Or, if you buy wind power at 45 cents and sell at six cents, it's going to drive the price of electricity up.

They claim that they're going to produce 50,000 jobs through that Green Energy Act. I say that there's a very real risk that we're going to lose many, many jobs because of higher electricity prices. When you look at the Ring of Fire and you look at this big chromite discovery, the danger is that with all the value-added enterprises connected with that mine and with this big, new discovery, the ore is going to end up being processed in

Manitoba and in Quebec because they have much more reasonable electricity prices. So the actual policies of this government could be making things much worse. The Green Energy Act has the very real possibility of, despite what the government says about promising jobs, actually costing us many jobs in mining, forestry and manufacturing.

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You see other things announced in the throne speech. They're talking about encouraging more foreign students and about 20,000 new spaces. That, it seems to me, is just another initiative of the government to try to get some cash coming in because they're totally unprepared or unwilling to change their ways of just spending more money and coming up with new programs. They're absolutely unwilling to make the tough decisions to try to control their spending. They're looking at foreign students as the cash cow to try to get more money into colleges and universities, and meanwhile colleges have seen a 15% increase in their applications. So where are the spaces? Where are the spaces going to be for those Ontario residents?

We look at some of the promises they made in the throne speech. I think their exact words were "the great recession." If you look at the analysis of the recession we're in, done by the Fraser Institute, they say that this recession—that hopefully we're over—is more correctly about the same as one we had in 1957-58, which was based on a contraction of credit markets. They concluded that while there was a severe recession, it ranked third in overall terms of gross domestic product decline, fifth in terms of length and third in terms of the unemployment rate.

This government is trying to make things seem worse than they really are. They're trying to just keep going with their big spending ways, and you just absolutely cannot believe the promises they make in a throne speech.

You look at their past record, and it's an awful record. They promised 35,000—which throne speech was that? I think it was in the 2007 throne speech they promised 35,000 long-term-care beds. I think there may be one or two that have been built now, but there are certainly not 35,000. It's very clear that commitment was not kept. When you look back to the past PC government, we actually built 20,000 new long-term-care beds and we rebuilt 16,000 long-term-care beds. There seems to be a real difference here.

The past PC government would make a commitment and they'd actually do it. You can go through the list of commitments this government has made—how many times have they committed to shutting down coal-fired generation? I think it was in the 2003 election. It was in the 2005 throne speech. They were going to close down coal-fired generation in 2007, then it was going to be 2009. Now it's 2014, and they still don't have a concrete plan.

They made a commitment to reduce the use of consultants. I think that was in the 2003 throne speech, and

yet post that commitment we see up to \$1 billion with very little show for it, most of it going to untendered contracts to consultants in the eHealth scandal.

They've said one thing in their throne speeches. You can go through—there's a long, long list of unfulfilled commitments in those throne speeches, and this one I think is no different, these phantom promises that they have made.

In this throne speech they're talking about reducing the government civil service by 5%. What have they actually done? They've increased the public sector at eight times the rate of the private sector—eight times the rate. We've seen a huge increase. They already had announced this, I believe, in last year's budget, but now they're talking about reducing the civil service by 5%. It just isn't believable.

In 2003 they talked about restraining spending. My goodness, that one they've really blown out the door because the budget—for those people unfamiliar—was \$68 billion that we were spending in 2003. This year, they're planning on \$119 billion in spending, over a 65% increase in spending.

What they've said in the past throne speeches and what they're doing now just really makes you question the credibility of this government.

In wrapping up and letting the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke take over, who I'm sure will have much more to add to this speech, their past record is so bad that we just can't believe anything they commit to in this year's throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate not only the enthusiasm that members of the PC caucus have for supporting me in my efforts to speak, but also the enthusiasm from the folks on the other side. And I've got tell you, they're showing a lot more enthusiasm to hear me than they were for the Premier's throne speech yesterday. We know the Lieutenant Governor delivers the throne speech, but it's the Premier who writes the words, just like he writes the words for all of those questions when those backbenchers get up to say, "This is of the greatest public importance and it has to be asked today." The Premier's office writes all of those words, too. So I really do appreciate it. It's very nice of them to show that kind of cordial welcome towards me.

I want to say that I really do appreciate the comments of our leader, Tim Hudak. You know, Tim has been travelling around this province and actually listening to Ontarians, actually listening to find out what they see, what their problems are and what their concerns are, while the Premier is living in a bubble; he's living in a bubble. It's a kind of virtual bubble, like that virtual college he's going to create of 20,000 online students, this virtual university that he was talking about in his throne speech.

But I've got to tell you, in my time in this chamber, I have never seen at the end of a throne speech—and I've

seen the throne speech in 2003, one in 2005 and one in 2007. After every one of those throne speeches, there was still some lightness in the step of the members of the Liberal caucus as they left this chamber. They actually looked like they believed what the Premier was saying. They actually looked like they were kind of excited and thought, "Do you know what? We really think we're on to something here, and the Premier's going to deliver a plan that is going to help Ontario." After yesterday's throne speech, I saw that caucus walk out of here, heads—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I just remind members that there is one person speaking. That's the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: One second. I apologize, everybody, but I just came from a police officer's funeral, and I know we had another police officer who was murdered yesterday, and I noticed out front that we don't even have the flags at half-mast. I'm wondering if it's a policy that we don't do that anymore or if it has been overlooked, but I'd like to see the flags put at half-mast.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. That's not a point of order. Thank you very much.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's good to see our member from Simcoe North back. We appreciate his attendance at that police officer's funeral today, and we thank each and every police officer for the sacrifices they make and the willingness to put themselves in harm's way every day to protect us in this great province.

But back to the throne speech, and what is this Premier doing to protect us in this great province? What he's doing is telling a fairytale. One of the headlines today was, "It's Dalton in Wonderland." They suggested that all the Premier had to do was put on a top hat and he could have been Johnny Depp. Well, sadly, that's the kind of comical way that people are depicting the Premier when he comes out with a vacuous, empty, worthless throne speech like he tabled yesterday.

Ontarians were looking for something more. Ontarians were looking for a way out of, yes, one of the deepest and worst recessions we've seen in a long, long time. They're looking for answers; they're looking for a vision; they're looking for a plan. What did they get but this empty document that was an excuse to rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic over there? They did a seat sale yesterday. It's like Air Canada: It was a seat sale. They moved some of the ones out of regular class and they moved them into first class, so they're going to get better meals now or something, or maybe they can get cocktails for free in the new seating plan. But that was not what Ontarians were looking for. They weren't looking to see the chairs rearranged over the weekend—prorogation, so move the chairs. No, they actually wanted some real answers and some real plans with meat on the bone for what Ontario is going to face over the next couple of years. As our leader said, a billion a word, 24 words, a

\$24.7-billion deficit. That's what we had in that throne speech to address the deficit and the debt in this province.
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These guys live in dreamland. They think they can just keep spending and that's going to make everybody happy. It's sort of like the guy who's got four or five kids and just wants to keep making them happy, and the allowance keeps rolling and rolling. Dad doesn't tell them at some point that he has lost his job in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, but at some point they end up going bankrupt. He never wanted to tell the kids how tough things were because the kids were happy when he was giving them the money. That's what these guys are like. They figure that everybody's going to be happy if they just keep flowing it out, paying it out, don't worry about the debt, don't worry about the deficit, but my children, my grandchildren, your children, your grandchildren are going to have to pay for that. There is going to be a day when you've got to face the music and pay the piper, and they don't seem to be willing to deal with the reality.

Like the Premier said yesterday, "We don't want to move too fast to deal with the deficit." I'll tell you how fast they moved to create this deficit. As my friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka said, in 2003 spending in this province was \$68 billion. It took 130-some years since Confederation to get there, and in just six short years we've gone from \$68 billion to \$119 billion. A constituent was asking me the other day, "But I guess they need the money, right?" And I said to him, "Well, spending has gone up. Since I've been an MPP, which coincides with the election of Dalton McGuinty's government, spending has gone up from \$68 billion to \$119 billion—over 60%." I said, "Do you know anybody, on an annual basis, who has seen those kinds of increases in their personal budget unless they won Lotto Max?" Well, I'll tell you, he hasn't won Lotto Max, but he spend like he's won Lotto Max. It is a serious misjudgement about his responsibility as a Premier and this government's responsibility to people in this province.

I want to read a couple of things. Don't take my word for it; I'm partisan, although I very seldom deliver a partisan speech in here. But I am a member of the PC caucus and I believe in our goals and principles, and I believe I have a responsibility to point out when we believe that this government is on the wrong track. We used to be on the right track.

Let me tell you what Boyd Erman says. Governor David Dodge—this is the governor of the Bank of Canada. He's not the guy who drives a Dodge; this is the David Dodge.

Interjection: Former governor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Former governor, I know. "Mr. Dodge told a business audience in Toronto last week that Ontario's spending is outpacing revenue growth so quickly that the result will be a structural deficit equivalent to 3.5% of the province's economic output by 2020, even in good economic times...."

He goes on to say "Provincial deficits like Ontario's are likely to be 'very much more difficult' to eradicate

than the federal budget gap, Mr. Dodge opined in a recent talk in Toronto, because provinces are the front line for soaring health care spending. Solutions are likely to require higher taxes and user fees."

Moody's said in a recent report dealing with Ontario, "At 4.4%"—talking about their deficit—"of gross domestic product, the province's forecast deficit in the current fiscal year is far wider than any other province's."

"One-time asset sales such as any attempt to sell a chunk of provincial crown corporations aren't enough...."

"We're not looking for one-time measures that would provide a one-time infusion of cash that couldn't be sustained over time," said Alex Bellefleur, a Moody's analyst who covers provinces. Also, "We don't want rosy expectations of what economic growth will be and provinces saying that"—future—"revenue growth will solve their fiscal problems, because we don't believe it will."

That's a very important line because that is something that this Premier has hung on to since he got elected, and he's been very, very fortunate in that revenues in this province supported what he did.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Of course. That was due to the fact that you had a government before that actually made this economy work again, put people to work and created wealth.

But he depended on that revenue growth, and you know what happens to somebody when the revenue growth slows? A reasonable person will also adjust their spending. A reasonable person will sense that—you know what?—there's less coming in, there has to be less going out. Otherwise we've got a problem. But the problem with this government is they wanted to be—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You see, they spent so much time and so much of our money making friends with this union or this special interest group or this multinational corporation and Samsung, that they couldn't bring themselves to actually be responsible when it came to spending your money. You see, they just see it come in. They don't earn it. It's the people out there who earn it. They just take it for granted and spend it, and that's what's absolutely wrong about this government.

You know what I didn't see in this throne speech either? We see them going on and on about this commitment to green energy and the Green Energy Act in this province. Never once have they even thought for a second or even been willing to talk about or address the issue of cost. They want to talk about building new industries in this province, like the Ring of Fire and the chromite deposits, but you know what? If you're going to be in the smelting business and the mining business and the processing business and everything else, you need energy. What you want to do is drive the price of energy so high that those people who need that energy in order to create those jobs and in order to create that wealth are not going to be able to afford it in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Did they talk about nuclear? Not a single word about nuclear in this budget. We've got 3,000 megawatts of nuclear that are going to be shut down at Pickering in 2020. They're going to do some tinkering to try to keep those units operating until then.

By 2020, we will also have had to face the reality of refurbishing four units at Darlington to begin that refurbishment and also the six remaining units at Bruce Power that were built in the 1980s, which need to be refurbished themselves. So while you're taking six units at Pickering out of service and having 10 more needing refurbishment, not a word has been said and not a thing has been done about building new nuclear to replace them.

You want to talk about another promise: The other day I heard the energy minister saying, "We're getting close to making a decision on new-build nuclear." I thought that we made a decision on new-build nuclear in 2006 when Dwight Duncan jumped up and, to a great deal of fanfare, told the world that Ontario was back in the nuclear business, and we would be building new nukes. We were signalling to the world, "Don't worry. We will be able to guarantee you a reliable supply of affordable baseload power." That was the right decision. It is four years later, and not a thing has been done.

Do you know how you have jeopardized the economy of this province by doing nothing on that front? If you look at the OPG report last year, nuclear power, the regulated asset was about 5.8 cents per kilowatt hour. But they want to tell us that we're actually going to make our economy stronger and better by filling it with power at 16 cents, 19 cents, 40 cents, 80 cents.

1630

That's not the way—we all accept that there's a place for those kinds of renewable energy projects, but I'll tell you, as my leader pointed out to me, one thing that is not renewable in this province is the credibility of a Premier. This Premier is running low; the tank is just about on empty. Yet he comes out yesterday with this document that tries to convince the people—you know, if you were sitting here and you had not been a member of this House, if you just came here as a visitor yesterday, you would have sat here and thought, "Oh, my God, this is Wonderland." Johnny Depp might as well have been here, because if you were listening to that speech, you would really believe, quite frankly, "This Ontario place is quite interesting. They must be one of those few places that have those huge budget surpluses. They must be running about a \$12-billion surplus because, my God, this throne speech is just about the happiest—it's great. They must have an unemployment rate of about 2.5%. Everything must be just running along tickety-boo."

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: He's an illusionist.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's an illusionist. We may as well have had David Copperfield here with Johnny Depp, because the Premier is doing everything he can to create the illusion that things are well here in Ontario.

All he wants to do is to get by until 2011. If they can keep that shell game going and buy themselves—that's

all it's about right now. It is not about what you need as a working family. It is not about what you need as a student. It is not about what you need as a patient in a hospital or someone waiting for a long-term-care bed. You know what it's about? It's about, "How do we fool the people? How do we keep the wool over their eyes until October 2011? If we can just keep the shell game going a little bit longer, we're going to fool them again, and we're going to get ourselves another four years." That is what is happening in this House with that throne speech yesterday. That's what the plan is: Let's just get by. "Let's move all of these wonderful, grandiose dreams to page 5 or something, so nobody is going to really expect anything from us on this water plan and this water technology." Somehow they think that Ontario is going to be the only place in the world that's going to have the kind of brainpower and the skill sets and technical people to produce some of these products that will be necessary, and we're going to have a monopoly on them; we're going to be the only ones. It's all going to be Ontario. It's dreamland. It's dreaming in Technicolor. But they want to move everything just far enough away that people aren't expecting it tomorrow.

It's like, you know, that classic story, not always true, where the woman was always hoping that her man would propose to her, and he always kept saying, "We're getting closer. I just need to have these things in order." "I just need to line up my ducks a little better here." "I'm going to get my education first." "I'm just going to pay for my car first"—always making that promise: "Oh, we're going to get married, sweetheart. Don't break up with me. We're going to get married. We're going to get married." He just keeps putting that promise off a little further and further down the road.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But has the relationship been consummated?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I can't get into the technical details on that, I say to my friend from Welland, but I will tell you this: The people of Ontario are tired of Dalton McGuinty's promises. They see that time and time again—and my leader, Tim Hudak, and my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka have been through it. I could go through the list ad infinitum. We could re-emphasize which promises were broken and which promises have not been kept. But suffice to say that what has happened over and over again on the key commitments of this government, key commitments that they have made to the people of Ontario, is they have not followed through.

My friend from Simcoe–Grey brought up a good one today in question period. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities just sloughed it off and dismissed it, but they made an ironclad commitment to students that they would have a \$300 book credit for them: an ironclad commitment. Nobody in the province got \$300, and only those with OSAP got a portion of that at \$150. But did we see a story in the paper that said, "Dalton McGuinty broke his word again"? No. No. Do you know what we see in the paper? "Dalton McGuinty Is Promising You a Better Tomorrow."

The people have had it. The people are tired of those promises. It is time for Dalton McGuinty to stand up and act like a Premier. If he can't, step aside, and we'll bring a Premier in who can.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Gravelle has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1636.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 10 March 2010

Mercredi 10 mars 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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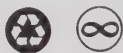
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 March 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 mars 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 9, 2010, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I would like unanimous consent to stand down our lead.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed. Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have a few minutes this morning to make my remarks. I'll mention right at the beginning that I will be sharing my time with the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

I would like to begin today, in my response to the throne speech, with I suppose a bit of a reminder of where I feel like we were, before I talk a little bit about where we're going. The throne speech represents to me, and I think to other members of the Legislature, a bit of a jumping-off point in terms of where we are today and where we will move on a go-forward basis.

I think that most of the people in the province of Ontario are very familiar with the fact that the global community has been struck by what many describe as the greatest recession since the 1930s. We also are aware that, as a result of that recession, the revenues of the province of Ontario have significantly declined and we find ourselves in a significant deficit position.

I think it's important to mention, however, that while Ontario represents about 40% of the Canadian economy, when you contrast our deficit with that of the federal government you will find that they are closely related in terms of their percentage of the Canadian economy. So in fact when you compare Ontario's position—while it's not one we wish to find ourselves in—on a relative basis to other jurisdictions around the planet, where we are now just provides us with more work to do going forward.

How we in the province of Ontario responded to the recession is something that's worth reminding people about before we talk about what we're doing to move forward. As many people will know, one of the approaches we took in Ontario was significant investments in infrastructure and retraining. That's where we sort of planted our flag, so to speak, and I would say we did that before the recession had even hit.

Many people will recall, going back to our election in 2003, that we had made a commitment to significant infrastructure spending, I would suggest even before it was fashionable to do so. We came to that election in 2003 with a very clearly articulated piece of our platform speaking to the fact that we felt that in the province of Ontario there was a significant infrastructure deficit existing at that time.

One of the ways that the previous administration had decided they were going to pay for their income tax cuts—a series of tax cuts in the province of Ontario—was, we believed, through a lack of investment in infrastructure. As a government, we invested heavily in the first three or four years, from 2003 to 2006 or 2007, \$30 billion in infrastructure in that three- or four-year period. And as many members here in the Legislature today will know, we continued with those investments—\$32.5 billion in the following two years, \$28 billion of that, again, being provincial money. That was the approach we took after having identified what we felt was a serious infrastructure deficit in the province of Ontario back in the election of 2003.

As I like to remind people, we've been doing this for a long time, not only when the recession hit, but we seriously increased and continued our investments in infrastructure once the recession did in fact take place.

We throw the word “infrastructure” around in a very loose fashion, but I think it's important to remember the significant impact that those investments can have. I represent a riding, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, that has within its geographic boundaries many very, very small communities; not only small in population, but small in tax base. Oliver, Paipoonge, O'Connor, Neebing, Conmee, Gillies, Atikokan: These are all small communities by population and small communities by tax base. But one of the things they all have as a common denominator is very large geographic land masses and small tax bases with which to support that large land mass.

These major infrastructure investments we have been making for five, six or seven years now have a disproportionately positive effect, I would say, on these smaller communities that are contained within my riding, and I'm

sure that most members of the Legislature could tell a similar story if they chose to. Tens of millions of dollars have been invested in these small communities. Not only have we, through those investments, significantly increased job creation in those areas where infrastructure investments have been made, but we have allowed them to go forward with projects that they would otherwise not likely have been able to do. In many cases, they simply do not have the tax base to do that.

Not only in the small communities, but even in my home of Thunder Bay, which is a larger municipal centre of 110,000 or 120,000 people—by standards in my riding, obviously the largest community by far—we have made huge infrastructure investments. It has created a tremendous amount of tax room in the city of Thunder Bay, and has allowed them to go forward with projects, I would suggest, where they otherwise might not have.

I would just flag two examples of that on the books right now, already begun in Thunder Bay: our commitment to a brand new courthouse, part of our infrastructure and capital regeneration programs, somewhere north of a \$100-million project; and a long-term-care home project that I'm sure is also going to approach somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$100 million when it's online. Those two projects alone—\$200 million—both of which are ramping up now, are providing brownfield regeneration, downtown south core revitalization, tremendous job opportunities in the building trades and construction work for people in the city of Thunder Bay. All that is coming.

0910

The other half of what we did when the recession hit was to invest heavily in retraining. We knew that as a result of the recession, there were a lot of people who found themselves out of work, and what we did primarily, but not only, through our Second Career retraining program was set a target of 20,000 or 21,000 that we wanted to get into that program. In fact, we exceeded the program targets significantly. I think we topped out somewhere in the neighbourhood of 26,000 people.

I can tell you that I have witnessed and experienced first-hand the effect of those retraining dollars in many communities in my riding. I have to say that I do notice, from time to time, that when we talk about our investments in retraining and education, members of the opposition seem to dismiss these investments as being insignificant, but I can tell you that I have witnessed first-hand the effect of those investments.

I remember very clearly a visit I paid to the Atikokan adult literacy group in my riding. We invested in that small organization in Atikokan and had an opportunity to hear one, two or three different people speak about the impact that those retraining dollars have had on their ability to find themselves a capacity to get back into the job market.

Many of these people are laid-off forestry workers. We know that in Canada alone, somewhere north of 200 pulp and paper and sawmills have closed over the last six or seven years. Members of the opposition would like to have people believe that this is only a problem in On-

tario, or more specifically northern Ontario. People who are paying attention to this issue of course know that's simply not the case. This is all across Canada; in fact, it's all across the planet, I would suggest, where we're seeing these closures. Many of those people who are in my riding are laid-off forestry workers, and these retraining programs have allowed many of them to find a capacity to get back into the workforce. I'm very, very proud of that.

Once you've seen one of those stories—a first-hand testimonial by some of these people affected by those retraining dollars—it really commits and sends home to you the importance of programs just like it. I want to thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, John Milloy, for his continued commitment to that program.

As we go forward now—that's sort of the history of where we've been. We heard in the throne speech two or three themes that I'm very excited about. One is that the Premier has very clearly articulated, on behalf of our government, that we are going to continue to maintain our commitments to what have been our priorities over the last six or seven years—that's health care, education and creating jobs for the economy in Ontario.

I can tell you that the list of improvements in the health care situation in Thunder Bay–Atikokan is too long to mention here. I could easily do 20 minutes just on what we've been able to manage when it comes to health care improvements in my riding, and I know that all the members that I'm honoured to share this Legislative Assembly with would probably have the capacity to do the same thing in regard to what has occurred in their home ridings.

We heard, on education, our commitment to fund 20,000 more spaces in post-secondary education, beginning, I think, with the fall intake coming up in 2010, and health care commitments continue to be at the base of what we plan to do.

In my riding, as I've said, there are many, many examples that I could list, and I think I'll use my last 30 or 40 seconds here to highlight what we've clearly articulated in our throne speech, such as the commitment we have in terms of resource development. The throne speech speaks very clearly to the Ring of Fire. I know that people in northern Ontario and northwestern Ontario are very much looking forward to what that project is going to yield to the benefit of all northern communities and of all people in the province of Ontario, including our First Nations communities, as we go forward. I know, without a doubt, that we are going to do everything we can. I know that several ministers are involved in this project. We're going to do everything that we can to see that move forward to create jobs in northern Ontario.

My time is up, and I'm happy to yield the floor to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I appreciate the opportunity to follow the remarks of my colleague from Thunder Bay—

Atikokan and also to speak in strong support of our government's speech from the throne.

The five-year Open Ontario plan will aid us in expanding and strengthening our economy through exploring new opportunities. It will create an Ontario even more open to new ideas, new people, new investments and new jobs. Open Ontario means a greener Ontario that will build upon our successes from the Green Energy Act by developing a Water Opportunities Act. I'm going to be focusing my remarks on this aspect of the speech. I'm sure that during the 12 hours of debate, we will have time to explore all the aspects of the speech.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, I have been hearing a great deal about water conservation, efficient use of water and new treatment technologies from many stakeholders over the last few months. This is an area of great interest to the constituents of my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. The Oak Ridges moraine is the headwater of so many rivers and streams that flow into both Lake Ontario and Lake Simcoe that we've taken this apparently abundant supply for granted. But with our rapidly growing population, even we have had to limit lawn-watering in summer, and the realization that water is a precious resource is gradually dawning.

Of course, the rest of the world is far more keenly aware of the situation. One billion people worldwide lack access to clean water, and almost 50% of the world's population will live in water-scarce areas by 2025. In the next 20 years, worldwide demand for water is expected to be 40% greater than current supply—a crisis in the making if the world does not act.

Compared to other jurisdictions with similar living standards, Ontarians consume large amounts of water. On average, the per capita residential use of water is 260 litres per day, close to twice the amount used in many European countries, including the United Kingdom and Germany. While we are surrounded by the largest lakes on the planet, a closer examination demonstrates that Ontario's water resources are not as abundant as we perceive. The Great Lakes are essentially a relic, a one-time gift of the glacial melt that occurred at the end of the last ice age. They replenish at an average rate of only 1% per year and are a fragile ecosystem in delicate balance.

The conservation of the world's most precious resource is at the very heart of the Open Ontario plan. It will strengthen our economy, create jobs, further protect our health and put our educated professionals to use. By managing this resource responsibly, there is an opportunity for the province to translate our water expertise and stewardship into economic growth. We want to make Ontario a world leader in water conservation technologies and services, and establish a global presence in a sector that the Conference Board of Canada has valued at \$450 billion worldwide per year, a value that will be doubling every five to six years, reaching nearly \$1 trillion by 2020.

Water shortages will drive the need for innovations that emphasize efficiency, reuse and source diversifi-

cation. With the right encouragement, Ontario's water technology sector is poised to seize the opportunity. A number of leading-edge water and waste water technology companies, nationally renowned research organizations and several water modeling software companies already call Ontario home. The water industry is the largest subsector of Ontario's environment industry, generates \$1.8 billion in sales per year, and currently involves some 1,000 firms and 22,000 workers. This existing network of expertise in innovative water solutions, particularly in water recycling and reuse technologies, presents a pivotal opportunity to expand Ontario's technology sector.

Ontario is already home to several water efficiency networking organizations, including the Canadian Water and Wastewater Association, the Ontario Waterworks Association and the Canadian constituent of the binational organization Alliance for Water Efficiency. An economic study conducted by the latter organization states that investment in water efficiency as a form of economic stimulus can be quickly deployed to yield 15,000 to 22,000 new jobs for each \$1.2 billion invested. These jobs could be right here in Ontario, in service sectors such as plumbing, landscaping, engineering, construction and design, and in manufacturing sectors involved in supplying everything from rain barrels to water-efficient appliances.

A growing number of water efficiency consultants and technology firms are also setting up shop in Ontario. Examples include businesses that advise on municipal water conservation programming; internationally recognized experts on water efficiency standards for fixtures; and technology firms offering innovative rainwater harvesting, grey water recycling, and waste water reuse technologies. Green innovations mean good, green jobs for Ontarians and a more prosperous, globally competitive Ontario.

When the global recession struck, things became very difficult for many Ontarians; many people lost their jobs and homes. A Water Opportunities Act has the potential not only to provide job opportunities for the people of Ontario, but also to save costs in the future.

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According to some estimates, \$25 billion is needed over the next 15 years to repair and update the province's aging water infrastructure. Public funds are therefore needed to focus on maintenance. With water efficiency measures, we will be able to stretch the capacity of existing infrastructure, deferring the costs of future infrastructure expansion and resulting in considerable long-term savings for citizens.

Water and waste water treatment systems are energy-intensive, and therefore the power required to operate them is a major cost for municipalities. Water efficiency and conservation therefore also present a significant opportunity for reducing energy uses and the costs associated.

A Water Opportunities Act will also further the Green Energy Act in helping to protect our environment. Keep-

ing sufficient water in watersheds, wetlands and aquifers is critical to ensuring ecosystem function and health. Less power use for water treatment systems will lower greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to the global effort to slow the progression of climate change.

In fulfilling a political commitment to water conservation and efficiency, Ontario has a number of existing instruments and policies that we could build on. The Green Energy Act makes the link between energy and water and enables minimum standards to be set for water-efficient appliances such as toilets and clothes washers. Environmental farm plans offer an existing mechanism to encourage the adoption of water conservation and efficiency best practices for agriculture. The Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act amends the Ontario Water Resources Act to enable volume-based fees for highly consumptive commercial and industrial water users. Adopting the Water Opportunities Act will help to encompass all of these existing instruments and policies that have served Ontario well and help us to build upon them to create an effective provincial strategy.

The provincial government's lead on water conservation can serve as an example to many other communities in assisting them to also make changes. We can certainly learn also from many other jurisdictions that have to date enacted some of these changes themselves. Some ways the government of Ontario could promote water conservation would be to implement rainwater harvesting and grey water reuse systems in government buildings and use them as demonstration sites. Many of the industry leaders whom I've had the opportunity to meet over the last few months have said that there's an irony in that they are able to sell their expertise globally, and yet they do not have the opportunity to use this technology in Ontario. The opportunity for demonstration sites would be extremely useful to help our municipalities understand the potential in all these conservation and water efficiency measures.

The throne speech lays out a path for Ontario to develop water conservation and efficiency strategies and represents an enormous opportunity to propel our province into the 21st century of water management. A Water Opportunities Act has the potential to bring growth to our economy and bring jobs into our communities. After all, the word "Ontario" is believed to be derived from the Iroquoian word that means "sparkling, beautiful water." That is our brand, and it is time to sell our ideas, expertise and technology to the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Nepean—Carleton.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Nepean—Carleton. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be back here with all of our colleagues on all sides of the House.

It is important indeed that we debate matters of the day. This throne speech was a big disappointment for many of us on this side of the chamber who expected a

visionary throne speech that would talk about three things: jobs, jobs, and jobs. It was a disappointment for us in the official opposition to note that only 24 words in the entire throne speech were dedicated to the economy, the debt and the deficit.

Indeed, these are challenging times. That is why we had been calling for a credible jobs plan from this government. Unfortunately, we did not see that in the throne speech. It was quite disappointing, particularly for those of us who have been calling for that type of plan.

Look, it all comes down to what we're most concerned about here in the official opposition, and there are two things: What promises did they make in the throne speech that they're going to break, and what didn't they include in this throne speech?

Let me just give you a couple of examples of things they have never put in a throne speech that Ontarians have had to pay for. The \$3-billion HST didn't make it into last year's throne speech. The \$15-billion, and counting, health tax never made it into a throne speech. The \$1-billion Samsung deal never made it into a throne speech. The \$358-million LHIN bureaucracy never made it into a throne speech.

What has been a broken promise? Well, investments in long-term-care beds have been promised and never materialized. The promise to bring more nurses online never materialized. And their promise to eliminate the coal plants by 2009 never materialized but, interestingly enough, popped into this throne speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I appreciate the comments made by the members from Thunder Bay—Atikokan and Oak Ridges—Markham, but I do want to ask a question of both of them—they may not have the time in the two minutes remaining.

I was intrigued by the Open Ontario plan as it relates to the post-secondary education system, because the government, through the throne speech, suggests that bringing 16,000 more international students might presumably solve the fiscal problems we face in our post-secondary education system. I want to put to my two friends that I don't believe that that economic strategy or political strategy or policy strategy is going to solve the major problems we have in our post-secondary education system.

I want to say to both of them—and to many members of the government here today—that we are number 10 in per capita funding in the country. We are still one of the most powerful provinces in the country, and we are number 10 in per capita funding for our post-secondary educational system. It's not a legacy to be proud of.

We have the highest teacher-pupil ratio in the country; it's one professor to 27 students, and it used to be one professor to 18 but a short 15 years ago. So the ratio is increasing. We have \$1.7 billion of deferred maintenance, and that number increases every year. We have pretty well close to the highest tuition fees in the country, meaning that students are more indebted than ever before.

I put to the two members: Do you believe this open strategy is going to solve some of these fundamental problems we have in our post-secondary educational system? That is a simple question that I put to them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First, I want to congratulate both colleagues, the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Oak Ridges–Markham, for their speeches on the throne speech.

It's very important that the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan mentioned our infrastructure in the province of Ontario, because it's fundamentally important for many different municipalities, like my riding of London–Fanshawe. This initiative gives us a chance to repair and widen many different streets and bridges which have needed it badly for many years.

Also, he spoke about the education and training of our people to prepare them for the future. It's very important. The Open Ontario plan is incredibly good, because so many people around the globe want to come to Canada and study and get educated here. I've had a chance to visit many different nations, and all the time they tell me that they want to come to Ontario. They want to study at the universities of Ontario because they believe strongly that we have the best education in the world. That's why it's important for us to open up and increase our capacity, not just for our students but for people from around the globe, because it's important to connect us with every part of the globe through our education system.

I listened to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham speaking about water technology. I come from the city of London. We have a lot of companies, like Trojan, and they work very hard to produce the best technology to purify water and treat sewage water. It's important for all of us to introduce our technology, not just for Canadians but for the world, because we have technology that we can offer. We can help the whole globe treat their water and conserve their water.

I think the speeches fit very well in our agenda and explain our visions for the future and for this province. We believe strongly, as many members said before me, that we have work to do. We are the leader in this country and we can be the leader in the whole world.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen to the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Oak Ridges–Markham. They did read the speeches very effectively, I would say, that were presented to them, as did the Honourable David Onley in his speech from the throne.

What I tend to look at is what the people are saying and what was the response. I'm using third party commentary here from the media, basically, and this is just a small survey of what the media have said.

The first one here is the day after, March 9: "Two Throne Speeches, Two Divergent Courses." They're trying to drive a wedge, if you read the article—it's worth

reading—between their vision of Ontario and the reality of Ontario.

The next one is an article also from the ninth: "It's Dalton in Wonderland," yes, which is quite remarkable. Wonderland: That means he doesn't really recognize, in the remarks in the throne speech, the dilemma of families in Ontario that are out of work.

The next Ontario politics message here is, "McGuinty Trades Bleak Messages for Talk of a Bright New Future." That's the wonderland, that's the dilemma and that's what he's trying to do. He's ignoring the reality and trying to deal with some promises, which I think we all agree with, to the largest extent. But how does he fund them?

I'm just going to continue here in the limited time: "Double-Talk Dalton McGuinty." I'm not making these up. These are from the media.

"Canada's Greece? Ontario Better Get Its Act Together." In this one, David Dodge says that Ontario is spending more money and the spending is increasing faster than the growth in the economy.

There's trouble on the horizon. They can't possibly afford all—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Response?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for sharing the time with me today, as well as the members from Durham, Nepean–Carleton, Trinity–Spadina and London–Fanshawe for their comments.

From those who have responded in their two minutes, there's a bit of a common denominator: some complaining about what was contained in the throne speech. I would suggest perhaps to them that there's a bit of confusion around what a throne speech contains and what a budget contains. I think we're all aware that in the not-too-distant future, the finance minister, on behalf of our government, will present in the Legislature our budget. We're all going to be seeing, contained within that document, a little bit more of the detail that some of the members perhaps thought should have been contained in the throne speech.

I think we all are aware that the throne speech represents a bit more of the macro direction, the broader strokes, in terms of the direction the government is going to be taking over the next five years. More of the detail will be contained in the budget, and we will see that presented here in due course.

I do want to restate a couple of the points that I made in my opening 10 minutes.

Contained within the throne speech, we've seen what will be a continuing commitment on behalf of our government to what have been our main priorities since we were elected in 2003 and what will remain our priorities on a go-forward basis: job creation, health care and education. I thought the throne speech spoke very directly to those.

We have seen incredible investments in health care on behalf of our government since we were elected in 2003.

The throne speech continued to articulate that that will remain a priority of our government, as it is a priority for most, if not all, of the people of the province of Ontario.

We have made record investments in health care over the last six, going on seven, years. While the rates of increase that we're able to funnel and channel into our health care system are not likely to remain as robust as they have been in the first six or seven years, I think it's very important that we speak to the people of the province of Ontario and remind them and suggest to them that this will still remain a priority for our government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to offer a few comments on the throne speech.

I think that it's interesting—I listened to the last speaker and his comments, and I think we would share the same comments with regard to the purpose of a throne speech. It's an appropriate time for the government to introduce a throne speech, as it is halfway through its mandate, and people, then, are naturally looking for a statement of vision, a statement that gives some confidence and purpose to the last half of this government's current mandate.

There are, however, on the part of the public, certain expectations: expectations that the throne speech would reflect the concerns of Ontarians, that the throne speech would assuage people's fears, that it would provide a road map to give Ontarians comfort that its government had a vision and a plan that confronts these concerns and fears.

While I listened to the throne speech, I was thinking about the kinds of fears, concerns and expectations that my constituents have. There's quite a significant reaction in my community amongst those who are the recipients of CCAC care and have noticed dramatic cuts in their service from the CCAC. So this would certainly be something they would be looking for. They'd also be looking for the comfort of a government that has a very clear plan on the issue of job creation. A number of them have also indicated, as they have to me, their concerns about infrastructure, because they look at even half a highway—the 404 between Mulock and Green Lane, and all the jobs that are there on that highway—as a way in which jobs can be close to home and they can be assured of the kind of economic productivity that every community needs. But there isn't any action or any plan in the immediate future on those kinds of initiatives.

They also represent a great many small and medium business owners, some of whom have told me that they are on the verge of simply closing the door because of the cost and the time and the expertise that continues to plague them on the issue of red tape. They have to provide that in-house time and expertise to be able to deal with an ever-growing amount of red tape.

They question the level of accountability of the government. They look at scandals like eHealth and other scandals and the approach of government to those, and they are in despair.

There are many who look at July 1 as the time when suddenly they're supposed to find 8% more in their pockets for such a wide variety of services that they depend on. Many seniors have commented to me about the fact that they're not going to get an 8% increase. They don't know where the money is going to come from to pay for the hydro, the heat, the gas in their cars. Many have suggested to me their concerns about, "What are we doing for our children and grandchildren when we leave behind for them a debt, a debt that has doubled in recent times, a deficit that is the highest in the country?"

Those are the kinds of things that are part of their vision, part of their concern, part of what they hoped the throne speech would include. Obviously, they instead heard a throne speech that followed, I would say, this government's tradition: making promises—some we've heard before, and some that are met with skepticism, from a past history of broken promises.

I want to take a few moments and look at some of these issues that we've heard before. In the throne speech of November 20, 2003, the government included an excerpt on education:

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"Your new government's first and most important priority will always be excellence in public education.

"Its goal is to make Ontario's public education the world's best education....

"Your new government will work with schools to make real improvements in children's reading, writing and math skills."

It went on to say, "We need to work together to accelerate that progress, to strive toward the ambitious goal of at least 75% of our children reading, writing and doing math at a high level by age 12."

In the November 2007 throne speech, the Liberals continued this monologue. The Liberals promised to improve achievement, but the truth is that we're paying more and getting less. Despite \$5 billion in extra funding, 33% of children in grades 3 and 6 failed to reach the provincial standard in reading, writing and math last year.

In 2003, McGuinty promised that 75% of students would achieve a B average on province-wide tests for reading, writing and mathematics by 2008. The Premier guaranteed this would happen. However, the Premier has failed to achieve his goal. Progress has stalled.

According to Ontario's Auditor General, "Further increasing the percentage of students achieving a B average on the EQAO literacy and numeracy tests will be a challenging undertaking."

Additionally, the Liberals' no-fail policy is failing students over the long term. The Liberal government's no-fail policy does not accurately reflect realities of the real world.

The Liberals promised the funding formula would be reviewed by 2010. It's now 2010 and the funding formula has not been reviewed. The Liberals promised to equip our children for the hypercompetitive global economy of the 21st century. However, according to Dr. Miner, "Ontario is on the verge of an unemployment crisis that

could be far more destructive than the 2009 recession." If the current trends continue, hundreds of thousands of people will lack the necessary skills to find any work. Dr. Miner indicates that more than 700,000 people in Ontario will be unemployed by 2021 due to inadequate skills and education. That means that more than 1.1 million Ontarians will be unemployed in just 11 years and will have "no prospects of finding work." Other experts predict that "75% of Ontario's population will require post-secondary education and training in order to be employable" by 2021.

This might seem more academic than anything else, except that in today's papers we have an announcement and a glimpse into the findings of the joint effort of the College Mathematics Project. It was released Tuesday. It examined 31,000 first-year math students across the province's 24 community colleges. The findings are really in stark contrast to the kind of information that the throne speech provided us with. This is from the *Toronto Sun*:

"Many Ontario college students are in danger of flunking business and technology courses because their math skills don't add up, a ... study says.

"The Seneca College-led College Mathematics Project notes as many as one third of students in first-semester mathematics are at risk of not completing their diplomas because they just can't do the math."

So I think that when you look back at these quotes of the government with regard to its commitment to education—a Premier who guarantees the kind of results he would like to see—it has then come up sharply with the kind of reality that this college test suggests.

I think there are two things we need to link together here. One is to go back to the point I made a moment ago about the Liberals' no-fail policy. Put that beside comments made from the conclusions of the math study. Many students identified as being at risk of failing math have a poor grasp of basic functions taught in elementary school, such as fractions, ratios, proportions and percentages. So students should be provided more practice in these.

The second conclusion: College and school staff should hold a round table discussion on how to streamline which high school math courses are required for admission to college courses and not have such a disconnect from school to school.

The third suggestion is that schools should convince parents and students to focus on time management and self-discipline.

I find it really interesting that on the one hand, the government clings to this no-fail policy and on the other hand, a report comes out and says that families must focus on time management and self-discipline. Well, usually you would expect that these notions would be reflected both between families and schools, but not in the McGuinty world of education.

While I have many other issues I'm going to try to highlight, it seemed to me that the most important message today should be the fact that while the Premier in his throne speeches, going back over the last few years, has

clung to this process of the EQAO and the urgency of making the numbers better and the guarantee that he has offered us, it would seem that this is not the reality when you look at this math project, when you look at Dr. Miner's caution about how seriously far behind we are and will continue to be unless there is a radical change in the direction and the expectations in terms of student achievement.

So while the Premier is offering to open Ontario's colleges and universities to the world—this seems to be the most ambitious part of the throne speech—I would say that looking after our own and making sure that, in fact, they have the adequate skills to be employable is certainly an important initiative and one on which the throne speech, this time, is silent.

I think it can't be understated that it's most important that people understand how serious this is. And of course, I think we would all remember that the Premier self-described himself as the education Premier. When you look at the record of past throne speeches, when you look at the reality that is facing us today, I would suggest that he has a great deal of work to do in a very short time.

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In the brief time I have left, I would just like to remind viewers about the other kinds of promises that the government has made and the kind of situation we find ourselves in; that is, a big gap between those promises and where we actually are at the present moment.

That would take me into a discussion about energy. In the throne speech of October 12, 2005, your government would replace coal-fired electricity generation with cleaner forms of energy, with the last coal-fired plant slated to close in early 2009. We know that there is only one coal-fired plant that has been shut down to date, despite the fact that this target of 2009 has become an ongoing moving target as time passes.

Another aspect of this is that, in the speech of November 29, 2007, your government would "replace coal, double renewables, double conservation and modernize our nuclear capacity." We certainly have seen a great deal of action on the renewable side, but the question of modernizing nuclear capacity has gone back and forth on new-build nuclear, so much so that it might be completely scrapped. Again, "modernize our nuclear capacity": This means, by anyone's common sense, new nuclear. But in the summer of 2009, George Smitherman abandoned Ontario's RFP process to build new nuclear, pushing the difficult decisions off onto a future government. On February 16, OPG announced it would spend \$300 million to keep the Pickering nuclear station open for another decade and would spend an undisclosed amount to refurbish the Darlington nuclear station. In other words, modernizing our nuclear capacity is merely repairing our existing capacity. The Premier has abandoned the nuclear file in favour of subsidizing Korean renewables.

There are many other examples of the promises that have been made in various throne speeches, including this one. But it's important to remember that a lot of the

things that people are really concerned about, as I mentioned earlier, are not there. I think it's understandable why people begin to feel a certain amount of abandonment by the government, a certain amount of frustration and a great deal of skepticism. It's that skepticism that is most unfortunate, because people do have an inherent respect for leadership. They understand that people have to make tough choices. What they really want is to know that when people make a commitment, that's what they're going to do.

As a member of the former government open to, obviously, a hot program of decision-making, one of the things that even the most critical was always able to say is, "You did what you said you were going to do." That is what is missing in the throne speeches when we look at the last three throne speeches.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the member for York-Simcoe for her commentary and I want to add some remarks of my own about the throne speech.

The throne speech was not quite a momentous document at all. One of the things that one would think the government would address would be climate change, and the only thing that really was in there was the whole question of urging the federal government to take a leadership position. The reality in this province is that this government has a climate change plan that won't even meet the targets that it states are necessary to meet. There's no commitment in this throne speech to actually address the failures in its plan and to put this province on track.

In terms of our credibility on water: Our leader, Andrea Horwath, said quite rightly in the media that we have people in this province right now on boil-water advisories. That's leadership? We have a Minister of the Environment who won't take action on site 41. He says that he's leaving it up to the municipality, when, in fact, that minister has the responsibility for protecting the groundwater resources of this province. He isn't taking the action that he is required to take. Politically and morally, he is not acting the way one would expect—demand—governments should act, and he is rightly being criticized by all those who are concerned about the future contamination of groundwater at site 41.

This speech from the throne is putting forward a very 3-D, Avatar-like picture of privatization of major assets of this government. The bundling of key assets of this province into a holding company is irresponsible—something one would expect from the Wall Street consultant Goldman Sachs, but not something I would expect the government of Ontario to adopt.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and add some comments on the throne speech that we heard the other day. I think, like any large organization that wants to compete in a global economy, such as

we're facing today, we need to set out a strategic direction, and that's the intent of the throne speech.

I'll tell you that the people in Oakville were very happy with what they heard the other day in the throne speech, because it gives them some hope for the future; that as we emerge from the recession that we've all faced here in North America, Ontario has a plan to emerge from the recession as an even stronger jurisdiction than before the recession took hold.

When you look at some of the details that are in the throne speech, you see things like fresh water technology. That clearly is something—when you look at the competitive advantages that Canada has, that the province of Ontario has, you will look at clean, fresh water. Our growing ability to be able to clean that water up for use over and over again is something that the province of Ontario is already very good at. Businesses in the province of Ontario are already very good at something that, obviously, we can get better at in the future, and something where there's a real appetite for that on a global perspective.

When you look at more student spaces, that's a sign of a government that is looking to the future, that realizes that the future of our economy lies in the education of our young people. To invest in education is a difficult choice right now because the economics of the province aren't, perhaps, what everybody would like them to be. However, we've chosen that strategic move to invest.

We're also starting to get into online education in the province of Ontario. If you look around the globe today, you realize that education itself is changing. The province of Ontario is on top of this issue. All in all, this is a great throne speech. It sets out, I think, a very strong, strategic direction for the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I don't think it was a great throne speech. I think it was a total rehash of old ideas that haven't worked. That's the part that was so shocking to me. Those ideas didn't work, and they're bringing them back as though they have been working.

People aren't stupid; people are worried. People have lost their jobs. People can't get retrained. People have put their families' lives on hold. Some kids can't go to university, waiting for their parents to get another job. What is this about? Old ideas that didn't work, brought back again.

Let me quote from the throne speech—"We don't want to compromise our future by moving to balance the budget too quickly." Too quickly? We've done nothing in the time that I've been here. In three years, I haven't seen this government move forward with an initiative that has worked. How much more quickly? Anything, any movement forward, would look quick right now.

We're not moving forward too quickly because this government has no ideas. It's in a desperate mode and it doesn't know what to do. So families are on hold.

Here's another quote from the throne speech—"Those international students who graduate can stay here and

help us grow our economy, or go back [home] and work as a partner with us in the global economy.”

What does that mean? We're making a deal with other countries to bring students over here? How does that make our students—potential university and college students—feel here at home? They've lost hope. They've lost hope in our province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you to the members from Toronto–Danforth, Oakville and Burlington for their comments.

I thought it was just a perfect juxtaposition when the member for Toronto–Danforth talked about the boil-water advisories and the member for Oakville talked about our water technology. It just seemed to me that there we have it in a nutshell. I actually wondered about the sale of the water technology that was mentioned in the throne speech, because even in this building we have lead pipes.

The people who are involved in the business of water and sewer main construction plead with the government all the time to talk about renewing the water and sewage system. They estimate that in some areas, as much as one third of all clean water seeps out of the pipes. I was fascinated to find out about this water technology that is going to capture the world market when Ontario goes out there. It will be interesting to see.

I think it's also one of the thrusts of the throne speech, again mentioned by the member from Oakville, on competing on the world stage. You juxtapose that with the comments by the member from Burlington and I get it: It means that all the problems at home aren't things we need to worry about. We need to have a bigger stage. That's what the Premier is looking for. He is clearly trying to sell hope, hope that we're going to catapult on to the world stage, even though we can't pass the math exams.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Gerretsen has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour?

All those opposed?

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Debate adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Orders of the day?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to call the next order of the day, and that is that there is no further business at this stage.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. I think we have it all worked out now. This House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1004 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: C'est avec plaisir que je souhaite la bienvenue à 60 étudiants et étudiantes provenant des quatre coins de la province. Ces étudiants sont avec nous aujourd'hui afin de participer au quatrième Parlement jeunesse francophone de l'Ontario. Ils proviennent des quatre coins de la province, comme je disais, et de leur école secondaire francophone respective de la région.

J'aimerais aussi souhaiter la bienvenue aux jeunes de la FESFO ainsi qu'aux enseignants et enseignantes qui les accompagnent.

Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Il me fait plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à deux élèves d'une école de ma région. Ce n'est pas souvent que j'ai de la visite d'Ottawa–Vanier : Anya Marcelis de l'école De La Salle, et Patricia Mugenzi de l'école Samuel-Genest. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to announce today on behalf of our page from the riding of Huron–Bruce, Colin Jansen, that his father, Steve, and his brother Travis are in the House today. Welcome.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of legislative page Matthew Kostuch, from Dr. Roberta Bondar Public School in Ajax, to welcome his father, Jim Kostuch, and his uncle Brian Nurse, sitting just directly south of the pillar in the west public gallery. We welcome them here today.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome to Queen's Park today Philippe Giguère, who lives in the Glebe in Ottawa Centre. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further introductions?

I would like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery Gilles Morin, the member for Carleton East in the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments, as well as Deputy Speaker from 1990 to 1997. Welcome back, Mr. Speaker.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Could I get your indulgence to introduce people from Nickel Belt?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you. It's Julie Dugas, Chantal Renaud and Cassandre Bergeron.

Mr. Paul Miller: Sorry, Speaker; I wasn't quick off the start.

I would like to welcome Maria Matuvanga from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question for the Premier. Ontario families can't trust a Premier who is prepared to saddle their children with record deficits and record debt. You, sir, are on course to double the provincial debt in two

years' time, but sadly, your throne speech—the same-old, same-old throne speech—contained merely three lines, just 24 words, about what you plan to do about the deficit and the debt. Premier, is 24 words really the best that you could do?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. I think my honourable colleague understands that the budget will speak in detail to our plan to eliminate the deficit. I think he understands the difference between the budget and the throne speech, where we placed before the people of Ontario a five-year plan, our Open Ontario plan. I think he would also want, given the Conference Board of Canada's report released yesterday, to take this opportunity to express his regret for his opposition to our heavy investment in infrastructure, which is supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, 24 words and a \$25-billion deficit: That's more than \$1 billion of deficit per word. When Finance Minister Duncan announced his record deficit, he admitted at that time that they didn't even start thinking about a plan to get the books back in balance. I remind you, Premier, that you famously said at that time that you were going to retreat to your thinking place. You've now spent five months in your thinking place and all that has emerged is 24 short words about balancing the books. Why should Ontario families trust Premier McGuinty when he won't make sparing their children from even more debt even the remotest priority?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I've spoken to that. I think my honourable colleague understands, notwithstanding his statements to the contrary, that the place for us to lay out our plan to address the deficit is in the budget.

I want to return to this Conference Board of Canada report because I think it is very important and good news for the people of Ontario. It confirms independently that our heavy investments in infrastructure in 2009 created some 183,000 jobs. More than that, it specifically says that, if not for our investment in infrastructure last year—2009—Ontarians would have lost another 70,000 jobs.

So our infrastructure plan, which this honourable member continues to oppose, last year accounted for 253,000 jobs. That's part of our plan. It's going to keep working for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: While the Premier slipped off into his thinking space after the fall economic update, the Ontario PC caucus announced our small-business jobs plan to restart small business as the engine of job creation in the province of Ontario. We've called for an immediate payroll tax holiday. We've called for a suspension of residential land transfer taxes to help make home ownership more affordable. We've called for modernizing our apprenticeship system, including a one-to-one journeyman-to-apprentice ratio to keep young, talented people here in the province of Ontario.

While you've disappeared to your thinking place, will you at least move ahead with these reforms to help small

business hire and create jobs in the province of Ontario once again?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the fact that my honourable colleague is now doing more than just offering criticism but is actually thinking of some proposals on his own, and I commend him for that. We've got our own plan. We continue to move ahead with that plan.

More good news: CIBC recently put out a report which said that Ontario's full-year growth rate this year should exceed the national average for the first time in eight years. It says that a harmonized sales tax—my friend opposes this—alongside cuts to corporate taxes—my friend opposes this as well—will boost competitiveness and help lure jobs. A focus on emerging sectors such as green power also looks to pay dividends. Finally, growth in Canada's banking sector stands to benefit Ontario disproportionately.

Those three aspects are specific parts of our Open Ontario plan, I am proud to say. We have many more things we're doing through Open Ontario to grow this economy and create more jobs.

GOVERNMENT ASSETS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think Ontario families are going to look askance at the Premier's five-year plan after the disastrous six-year plan of higher taxes and runaway spending that you've foisted upon Ontario families that saw a job loss of 140,000 positions in Ontario last year.

Premier, another initiative that did not appear in your throne speech was your megacorporation proposal. You are proposing to bundle the LCBO, Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. into one big, super selloff. Premier, are you so desperate for cash to pay for your runaway spending that you're willing to pawn off the future of our children and grandchildren?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will avoid the 407 debacle perpetrated on the people of Ontario by the Conservative government.

I know there's been a lot of speculation in the media about this, but I think it's important for me to help Ontarians get a better understanding what we're considering. We think we have a responsibility to take a look at some of our historic assets here in Ontario to determine whether or not it would be in the long-term public interest for us to find a way to get some money out of those assets, without giving up control over those assets, and invest that in a new foundation for prosperity and jobs. That's what we're talking about; that's what we're thinking about. No final decisions have been made in that regard. If my honourable colleague has any specific, positive proposals with respect to what we might do and how we might do it, we're open to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The problem is, we've seen where our taxpayer dollars have gone. They've gone down the drain in the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle that helped

Liberal-friendly consultants get fat and rich. We saw them handed out in billion-dollar sweetheart deals to foreign-based Samsung corporation, ignoring legitimate businesses here in the province of Ontario.

Premier, we understand that you have paid Insight Research Canada to poll Ontario families on your plan to sell off a 20% stake in your megacorporation, half to a private company and half to a large pension fund. Premier, I ask you: If you have nothing to hide, will you release that polling information and the full list of questions to the general public?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague says he resents the investment by Samsung because it's a foreign company. Should we tell Honda that they should remove themselves from Ontario? Should we tell Toyota that they should remove themselves from Ontario? What about Ford and GM? What about any foreign direct investment coming into our province and creating jobs for our people? Should we reject those as well?

This speaks to an outdated, antiquated, neanderthal, protectionist ideology reminiscent of Conservative governments of years gone by. We are an open province now: open to new investment, open to new ideas, open to new jobs, open to new growth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplement-ary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: While the Premier supports a buy-Korea policy, the Ontario PC caucus stands for a buy-Ontario policy to support job creation in the province of Ontario, not exporting jobs abroad.

Premier, we know you're on track to double Ontario's debt, and now you want to mortgage our crown assets by selling off a 20% share to fuel your runaway spending and your frivolous ideas. The problem with your megacorporation fire sale, Premier, is that you're going to hamstring the assets that we're going to need to pay back Dalton McGuinty's runaway debt.

So I ask you, Premier, again: Will you table your polling information, and will you tell us today what company and what pension fund you have in mind for your fire sale of 20% of Ontario assets?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to reassure my honourable colleague that we will not do with our assets what his government did with the 407. I want him to take some comfort from that commitment.

Again, my colleague stands against the Samsung investment in Ontario—\$7 billion, 16,000 jobs. I just want to remind my honourable colleague of an announcement made by the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure earlier today. He talked about 510 renewable projects that now have gotten the go-ahead because Ontarians are going to keep on working in this program. That's 510 Ontario-based business ventures, 510 new sources of clean electricity and all kinds of jobs making this new equipment—wind turbines, solar panels and the like—installing it and maintaining it.

We are open to investment, whether from outside of Ontario or inside of Ontario. But working with Ontarians and working with the world at large, we're going to create new prosperity—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Peter Kormos: This is addressed to the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The members will please come to order. The member from Brant will please come to order. The member from Sault Ste. Marie will come to order. The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan will come to order.

The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier, please: It is reported that on May 29, 2008, the Premier sat down to a dinner with a group of individuals who paid \$5,000 apiece for the privilege. Can the Premier tell us who was at the dinner and what was discussed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't say I recall exactly what my honourable colleague is talking about, but I do say that as leader of my party I have a responsibility to help raise funds for my party. That contributes to the strength of my party and overall contributes to the strength of our democratic system. I will not apologize for that. It is the responsibility of each leader, of every party and of every individual member of provincial Parliament to participate in this democratic process by helping to raise money for their party so that we can be stronger competitors and more committed to our democratic system. That's what it's all about, and I'm proud to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Local news indicated that a dinner took place, and Elections Ontario records show that companies named L.M. Holdings, D.G. Pratt Construction, Blue Sky Private Equity and BEMP Holdings joined the Premier. Can the Premier tell us who attended on behalf of these companies and just what was discussed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague presents this as if this is some grand revelation. This information is accessible to him because we've changed the law in Ontario to provide for real-time disclosure of political contributions, a process that was under the table and we now have put on top of the table so that all Ontarians can better understand our collective responsibility to raise money for our parties. That's why my honourable colleague has this information.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplement-ary.

Mr. Peter Kormos: In a truly remarkable coincidence, all of these companies hold land in a significant parcel of property that was, at the time, just outside of the city of Barrie and off-limits to development.

However, after this dinner, the Premier introduced legislation that would hand the land over to Barrie, lifting the freeze on development and making these properties very, very valuable.

Did the Premier discuss this at his dinner meeting with these companies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I will continue to meet with people of all kinds, on all sides of all issues, whether in business or in labour. After I've had these meetings, I will always do what I have always done, which is to ensure that the greater public interest is upheld, notwithstanding what the issue might be. I've been proud to do that throughout my political career, and I'll continue doing that.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier: These companies that wined and dined with the Premier on May 29, 2008, bought land, nearly 1,000 acres, in an area south of Barrie that was forbidden to development. They bought it for as little as \$26,000 an acre. Now that that land is part of Barrie and the freeze on development has lifted, land is being sold for an astonishing \$75,000 an acre. If these values hold, that's a \$30-million profit.

Surely the Premier can at least agree that his dinner companions have benefited from moves that the government has made since their dinner meeting.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I understand where my honourable colleague is going on this matter, and I reject his allegations and his not-so-subtle accusations completely and thoroughly.

I will continue to meet with Ontarians in various capacities, as Premier and as leader of my party. I will continue to keep myself open to all representations, because I think that's an important responsibility that we all must assume here at Queen's Park. At the end of the day, when we make a judgment call, we will always do everything we can to ensure that we are upholding the greater public interest.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Irrefutable facts: Developers meet with the Premier, they fork over \$5,000 a plate for dinner, and within a year the government has made an extraordinary intervention that doubles and triples the value of their properties.

Now, what prompted the Premier to make this intervention? More importantly, was it discussed at the private dinner for these Liberal donors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My friend is, I gather, unhappy and is looking for ways to express his unhappiness with the changes that we made to the Simcoe county growth plan. I can say that Simcoe county has adopted a new official plan. They sent it to the ministry for a decision. The Barrie-Innisfil Boundary Adjustment Act, 2009, was passed by the Legislature; the annexation became effective on January 1, 2010. It will ensure the continuing success of our growth plan. It is based on solid growth and planning principles. We stand by that, and we're proud of the decision that we made in that regard.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It seems it's also going to ensure \$30 million in new profits for these developers.

Once again, the facts: Developers own land that they couldn't do much with; they pay \$5,000 a plate to sit down and meet and wine and dine with the Premier; within a year the government introduces legislation that makes those developers' problems simply go away.

I think that people would be curious about what happened at that dinner. We certainly are. These developers have registered Liberal-friendly lobbyists already working on their behalf. They're not just generous Liberal Party supporters. This stinks.

Why won't the Premier tell us the real story?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is grasping. He is overreaching. Frankly, given his lengthy record of public service, it is unbecoming.

I have met with all kinds of people, and I will continue to do so. They will make representations of one kind or another with respect to how we might do things in government. I will continue to provide this reassurance to the people of Ontario, to an objective audience: that we will always work as hard as we can to uphold the greater public interest, to do what we believe is in the interest of Ontario families. We've always done that, and we will always continue to do that.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, when he was asked about 40 contracts the McGuinty Liberals negotiated and signed with US clinics and hospitals, the procurement minister hid behind the Minister of Health. Minister Takhar is not only responsible for procurement, but he is also your point person for transparency legislation, accountability and integrity.

Why would integrity czar Minister Takhar evade questions about the 40 deals you've cut to send Ontario patients to American hospitals?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know my honourable colleagues in the Conservative Party have been raising their concerns about Ontario patients who are getting health care in the US. It's important to understand that we don't have the highest levels of expertise in all areas of medical specialties, and we think it serves the interest of our patients from time to time that they access that expertise south of the border.

Again, I'm not going to be defensive about that. I'm not going to apologize about that. I think it's about assuring ourselves that, from time to time when we lack that subspecialty expertise here in Ontario, we avail ourselves of that for Ontarians where that might be found south of the border. We've done that in the past, as have many other governments. We'll continue to do it in the future as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We need to continually raise this because we keep hearing from this government that they are all things to all people in the health care system,

and increasing numbers of patients going to American hospitals show that that's simply not the case.

At least 40 contracts were signed to send Ontario patients to American hospitals since last spring. Those contracts were signed. You refused to release them in the past, and now you don't really want to talk about them too much, other than the acknowledgement that we've had today. Why won't the McGuinty Liberals release the contracts before tomorrow's question period if they have nothing to hide and they're free to talk about it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my honourable colleague would have us believe that we're the first government ever to fund procedures for our patients south of the border. This has been common practice for quite some time—likely decades. I see no reason to believe why it won't continue long into the future—likely decades as well.

Again, if there are subspecialties, areas of expertise that we don't have here in Ontario, which we believe our patients should have access to, then that's something that we'll continue to do south of the border.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Over the past week, Ontarians have been hearing of this government's plan to drastically redesign our home health care system. Ontarians want to know whether the minister has consulted with health care providers and their patients, they want to know what options were considered and they want to know why this plan seems to be adopting strategies that have failed elsewhere. Will the minister answer those questions, please?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to talk about some of the initiatives that we have to take in our health care system as we move forward.

We've spent the last six and a half years building the foundation of our health care system. We have enormously increased access to primary health care. We've brought down wait times for important procedures. We've got almost 10,000 more nurses working today than we did in 2003.

The health care system has addressed some of the access issues that were so in need of being addressed when we took office in 2003. We've been focusing on access. We're focusing increasingly on improving quality of care for patients, and, as we move forward, we simply must address the issue: Are we getting the very best value for money when it comes to our health care system?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ontarians are hearing that hospital funding will be directly tied to economies of scale, placing smaller and community-based hospitals at a permanent disadvantage.

Yesterday, I was in Welland listening to residents, physicians, nurses, the union and municipal politicians from across the Niagara region. These people were angry.

They were outraged, they were furious, they were livid that no one—no one—consulted with them before their emergency rooms were closed and their health care services were gutted.

Will this government build a health care system that works for all communities or only urban centres?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member opposite knows that it was the throne speech we had that lays out in broad strokes where we want to go next.

I can assure the member opposite that we will engage all of the people who are involved in our health care system, and that actually includes the people who fund our health care system—that is, the people of Ontario.

Of course we will be consulting with the people of Ontario, people concerned with health care systems, as we move forward in our plan to make the changes we simply must make if we want a health care system that's strong and healthy for our children, our children's children and our children's children's children.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care as well. We know how important it is to Ontarians to have a place to get the care they need outside of a hospital. Families want assurances that their loved ones have a comfortable setting where they can get the best care for their specific needs.

I know that the government's working hard to provide seniors with supports through the remarkable aging-at-home strategy, but we need to know how the government is supporting patients who require long-term care. My constituents want to see better access to long-term-care beds through quality improvements, a better living environment and increased staffing capacity.

To the minister: Could you please tell this House how the government is addressing the issue of long-term care in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to have the opportunity to talk to the House about some of the investments we've made in long-term care. We've increased funding for long-term care by over \$1 billion—that's 55%—since we took office in 2003. We've funded over 6,000 new full-time staff in our long-term-care homes, including 2,300 nurses, who are delivering almost 12 million more hours of hands-on care. This year, we funded 1,200 registered practical nurses in Ontario's long-term-care homes, ensuring at least one new nurse in every home. We've already invested \$23.5 million for personal support workers.

It's our government that has opened almost 8,000 new long-term-care beds, including 32 at Crown Ridge Place in Trenton and 32 more at Trent Valley Lodge. We've committed to adding another 2,000 beds in 10 communities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1100

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm happy to hear that so many new long-term-care beds have opened or are currently

under construction. I also know that many older long-term-care facilities need to be renovated in order to provide the best quality of care to Ontarians. More modern and comfortable facilities will bring many homes up to date in design and give residents better access to modern standards of physical comfort, privacy and dignity. In fact, many of these older homes will substantially increase the availability of long-term-care beds in Ontario if they are properly developed. Could you please tell this House how the government plans to improve older long-term-care facilities?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Just last month, we announced that residents in long-term-care homes can look forward to more modern, more comfortable living. We're rebuilding almost 4,200 existing beds, and we're updating facilities at 37 long-term-care homes. This is part of our government's plan to redevelop 35,000 older beds over the next 10 years, to help improve access and quality of care at homes throughout the province. The redeveloped homes will meet the most modern design standards and will feature greater wheelchair access for residents in private and public spaces.

The redeveloped homes are expected to be completed as early as 2012. This phase of our government's renewal strategy will help create or sustain approximately 4,000 jobs in Ontario. We know that for residents and their families it's all about comfort and it's all about safety. I'm very pleased we're able to redevelop these long-term-care homes and give residents a more comfortable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LAND REGISTRY SYSTEM

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is for the Minister of Government Services.

Minister, buried in the Consumer Protection and Services Modernization Act, 2006, was the provision that gave Dalton McGuinty the power to cancel rights-of-way and easements with the stroke of a pen. Dalton McGuinty used that power, cancelling rights-of-way at easements registered before 1967. Minister, this has meant that Barrie Richardson and others legally don't have access to their own property. The question is: What motivated the McGuinty Liberals to take away rights-of-way of families who have owned cottages and recreational property for generations?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, I'm very much aware of that issue and the changes that we are making. It has been brought to my attention, but the changes that we are making actually do not impact this issue at all. It is basically the status quo that exists right now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, once again you knew about it and did nothing. A lot of people in Laurie Scott's riding have brought this to my attention. It's also affecting constituents of the member from Peterborough, Jeff Leal, as well as the member from Prince Edward-Hast-

ings, Minister Dombrowsky, not to mention families in Minister Smith's riding, so I'm surprised about what you are saying to the House today. You eliminated these rights-of-way for Ontario families. It was completely arbitrary and unprincipled. Anyone who wants to stand up for their rights now has to pay a lawyer \$2,000 just to put back in place what they enjoyed before your action and intervention. Did you take away the rights because you're so out of touch with Ontario families that you didn't realize what you were doing to them? Or is it that you're indifferent to ordinary people in Ontario? Or, more importantly, did you do it to benefit your Liberal lawyer friends?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I think this member needs to do some real research once in a while, and he needs to understand what my responsibilities actually are once in a while as well.

I just said that the changes we have made do not impact at all, so there's nothing that needs to be done. I don't know what you want me to do. If the issue doesn't really impact, then—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: This law has existed since 1929. What I'm suggesting to this member is that the changes we have made do not impact at all the records that are manual right now. The same records will actually be automated. There will be absolutely no changes that will be required in the legislation we have in place right now.

GOVERNMENT ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Premier. According to the New York Times, Goldman Sachs, your Wall Street privatization consultant, set up a garage sale of Greek government assets to deal with their deficit earlier this decade. You're moving to give away decades of future revenue for a quick cash influx. When you say we won't have a fire sale of Ontario assets, does that mean we're going to have a Goldman Sachs-supervised garage sale of Ontario assets?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question and the opportunity. I can once again speak to Ontarians about what it is that we are looking at here. Again, we think the responsible thing for us to do in our circumstances, being in the second decade in the 21st century, is take a look at the assets that we've built up together over time and ask ourselves whether the money in those assets is best deployed in its present state, or whether we should be investing in ways to build a new foundation for growth and prosperity. That's what it's all about. It's about making sure that the money is deployed in a way that best serves the long-term interests of the people of Ontario. We have no preconceptions. There are no particular ideologies or biases that we're bringing to this enterprise, but we think it's responsible that we take a look at this.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabone: Well, that's certainly not the approach that the Premier took when he opposed Ernie Eves's sell-off of Ontario's assets. This Premier is starting a process towards full privatization of Ontario's key assets.

Premier, you're desperately looking for cash in the run-up to the election. Why should anyone believe that you won't do another deal as bad as the 407?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I recall, I thought there were at least a few NDP fingerprints on the 407 deal.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There were. They were there.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thought there were.

But fortunately, actions count more than words, so I'd ask Ontarians to judge us on the basis of what, if anything, we do with their assets, and they can apply the test themselves as to whether or not it serves their long-term interests. We look forward to engaging with them further on that score.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. For several years, Ontario has been a hotbed of mineral exploration and there are several and many exciting opportunities in exploration projects happening right across the province. In 2008, Ontario smashed previous records for exploration expenditures in the province, seeing nearly \$800 million being spent, and much of that, I don't mind saying, in my riding of Thunder Bay—Anishnabek. Further, in 2009, even with the economic downturn, Ontario still increased its market share of exploration expenditures. It's only through the work of these people on the ground taking these risks that the next big things are discovered, such as the De Beers mine that officially opened in the summer of 2008.

Minister, could you please tell us more about the Ring of Fire and about how it's going to benefit northerners and give them hope as they deal with these challenging economic times?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question. As the member knows, representing as he does Thunder Bay—Anishnabek, there is a tremendous amount of excitement in the north about the mineral potential of a number of discoveries in the Ring of Fire. May I say, that excitement is spreading all across the province. Certainly, it's one of the most promising development opportunities in almost more than a century.

10:00

This plan is also part of the Open Ontario plan, which makes us very, very excited as well. It's about taking advantage of opportunities like the Ring of Fire. That's what the Open Ontario plan means. It's about building a stronger economy; it's about creating jobs. Our information suggests that there is the potential, in the Ring of Fire, for more than 100 years of chromite production, as well as significant production of nickel, copper and platinum. This means jobs for First Nations communities and

many thousands of jobs as well for communities all across the north. We could not be more excited. Thousands upon thousands of jobs—a great economic development opportunity that we're looking forward to working on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, thanks very much for that. This mineral potential will be a significant driver for the north, supporting regional and community infrastructure development, without a doubt.

Amidst all of this excitement, we've also been hearing some news stories that express some concern around this development and its ability to move forward. They raised several environmental concerns as this project is in Ontario's Far North, as well as concerns by First Nation communities who are going to be impacted through the development of the mine itself and through the construction of associated infrastructure. I think it is important that we, as a government, speak publicly to these considerations, along with the economic ones, and how they are being factored into this exciting development.

Interjection: Fair question.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It is a good question, and I appreciate the concerns that have been expressed.

Let me just reiterate how excited everyone is about the opportunities that are presented here. There is, quite frankly, billions of dollars' worth of material in the ground that we can tap into, and it will put thousands of northerners to work. But there are legitimate concerns around environmental protection and aboriginal consultation and engagement, and we are dealing very specifically and directly with that.

As we move forward with this Ring of Fire development, my ministry and this government are fully committed to working with northerners, with aboriginal communities and with all the mining partners to fully realize the potential. Also, we're determined to see that the Ring of Fire's success story, from an aboriginal perspective, an environmental perspective and, of course, an economic perspective, is done in a very managed way.

We are committed to getting this right. It's a tremendous opportunity, but we're going to do it right.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Twice last week, Minister, I asked you to intervene with a no-cash investment to save 1,500 jobs at Grant Forest Products in northern Ontario. We are still awaiting your answer.

At any hour, a bankruptcy court is going to make a decision about who gets to buy the assets of this historic made-in-Ontario business. Minister, will you commit to a loan guarantee, where the funds are already available, that would give Grant Forest Products' bankruptcy proposal the boost it needs to compete with other bidders like Georgia-Pacific?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Indeed, I was asked about this last week. It is important to remind the member that

Grant Forest Products is in CCAA protection, which is a court process. It would be absolutely inappropriate for me or for us to interfere with that process.

We are certainly aware of the sale of Grant Forest Products' Englehart and Earlton facilities to Georgia-Pacific, and I know that Georgia-Pacific has been meeting with local municipal leaders in the community. They are committed to running the Englehart facility at full capacity. There is no question: We are keen to see as many jobs as possible in the forestry sector, which is why we're making some of the moves that we are and the decisions that we are to see those opportunities come forward.

Ownership changes are, quite frankly, a normal part of the business life cycle. We know it's unsettling, but we see some real opportunities in those facilities. We're going to continue to work to see an improvement and an increase in economic activity in the forestry sector all across the north.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's unsettling indeed—to the families most of all.

In Monday's throne speech, the McGuinty government said that it would support northern families. Well, Minister, the 1,500 families in Englehart and Timmins whose lives are hanging on your decision are not feeling that support.

There's no time left for you to consult your ministry officials or your cabinet colleagues—the same cabinet colleagues, I might add, from southern Ontario who didn't bat an eye at giving an \$80-million boost to Ford last week. But when it comes to northern Ontario, you're still sitting on your proverbial ring of fire. Well, it's D-Day for 1,500 families and the communities they live in. Will you give Grant Forest Products a loan guarantee or not?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We know that there was a consortium of northern business leaders who put forward a proposal to a court-appointed monitor. We know and expect that that will be given due consideration. This is a process that indeed has to go forward the way that it is moving forward.

We are absolutely committed to a revival of the forestry sector in northern Ontario and, in fact, all across the province of Ontario. There are many opportunities that are presenting themselves. I spoke last week about the wood supply competition that we have out there in the public, almost 11 million cubic metres of fibre that's out there available for the companies that are in place right now and some new entrants as well. We are working very actively on a review of our forest tenure system, which is an opportunity for us to look at how we can better make fibre available to those companies that can bring jobs to northern Ontario. We are absolutely committed to it, working as hard as we can, and looking forward to seeing the right decisions made in northern Ontario.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This question is to the Minister of Housing. Monday's throne speech completely ignored

the housing crisis faced by millions of Ontarians. In Ontario today, more people than ever are stuck on waiting lists for affordable housing—over 72,000 families in Toronto alone. Last year, we put forward a bill, which will be re-tabled in May, that would allow municipalities to pass inclusionary zoning bylaws to address this crisis. That bill passed this House unanimously on second reading.

Will the government, I ask the minister, be acting on inclusionary zoning?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I always commend the members of the Legislature for putting forth pieces of legislation that are very important to them. As a member of cabinet, I hate prejudicing what happens when bills are put before the House. The member has indicated she is going to reintroduce a bill; I think I heard that news from you. I know you wouldn't want me to make a bias against or in favour of the bill. I like seeing a full and complete debate on legislation of this kind. But I want to commend the member for coming forward with that legislation. I don't want to influence the Conservatives or members of the Liberal Party or the NDP on a private member's bill. I'll be interested in listening, I think as all members will, to the debate as it flows from the member and those who decide that they're going to contribute on a Thursday afternoon to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Unless the developer is at dinner with the Premier and changes the Minister of Housing's mind, I assume that the vote will be the same as last time. I hope it will be.

Municipalities around the province are demanding that the province allow them to pass inclusionary zoning bylaws requiring a minimum percentage of affordable units in new buildings. Inclusionary zoning has been endorsed by cities as diverse as London, England; Thunder Bay; London, Ontario; Milton—mayors and numerous city councillors in the GTA and Ottawa. Inclusionary zoning has proven successful in jurisdictions in the US, including Massachusetts, Washington, Virginia, California and the metro New York area. Inclusionary zoning would cost the government nothing and would create up to 12,000 desperately needed affordable homes per year.

Again I ask: Will the minister confirm that inclusionary housing will be part of Ontario's long-term affordable housing strategy when it's released in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Again, I hate to release it in dribs and drabs. You will know all of the contributions we've made. Unprecedented amounts of money have been dedicated to affordable housing by this government. You will recognize that for me to release the full report step by step, point by point wouldn't be nearly as effective as releasing it as a package.

Having said that, our ministry staff are analyzing carefully and consulting with people about all of the recommendations which have been made during that affordable

housing strategy consultation that took place. When we have been able to put the package together, we will be releasing that package. I know the member will be anticipating it with great enthusiasm because she has an interest in this field. But I don't want to give that information away before the full package is released to the public—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, there are many reasons why Ontario is a great place to invest, to live and to work. One of our province's strengths is undoubtedly our diversity and the contributions of newcomers from around the world. My riding of Oak Ridges–Markham is a great example.

We know that in order to equip our newcomers with the tools necessary to succeed, they must know what government programs and services are available and where to locate them. But often enough, newcomers are not made aware of what is available to them, both before and after their arrival in Ontario. To help newcomers find success, we need to ensure that they have complete access to information on settlement services and programs.

Minister, can you please tell this House what the government is doing to assist current and prospective newcomers this regard?

1120

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for her question. Our government is committed to helping newcomers succeed, and that is why we've invested more than \$700 million since 2003 to help newcomers settle, get job-ready and get licensed to work.

The member does raise a very important point, and this is that newcomers may not be aware of what services are available to them, both before or after they arrive in Ontario. That is why we are partnering with our federal and municipal partners to create municipal immigration websites. These sites provide prospective and current residents with a full understanding of what programs and services are available in municipalities. These online immigration portals also provide municipalities with opportunities to attract newcomers with much-sought-after skills and experience.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm happy to learn from the minister that our government is working with its partners to develop these online portals. There is no doubt that settlement services need to be supported by all three levels of government. These sites not only provide essential information to newcomers; they also support our municipal partners.

However, we must do more than simply provide information. We need to help newcomers access the tools and

opportunities necessary for success. Minister, can you please tell this House how we are assisting our newcomers?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to thank again the member for this important question. Let me be clear: Immigration is part of Ontario's long-term plan for economic growth. We need the global education and the skills and experience that newcomers bring to build a strong and prosperous economy, and that is why the government of Ontario is taking a multi-faceted approach to assist newcomers in our province.

To help newcomers apply their skills and support their families, we have invested over \$145 million in nearly 200 bridge training programs. To ensure that newcomers have the language abilities they need to be job-ready, we have supported adult language training programs with funding of nearly \$60 million each year. And to break down barriers to employment, we passed the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act.

Our government is working with newcomers to build a stronger Ontario.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Minister, is your government engaged in bait-and-switch activities here? Yesterday in a CBC radio interview about the Ring of Fire, you stated: "I've been sort of trying to get those people who are very excited to dial it back just a bit." But in Monday's throne speech, you called the Ring of Fire "the most promising mining opportunity in Canada in a century."

Minister, why are you speaking out of both sides of your mouth on the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Indeed, we are very excited about the potential opportunities, and the fact that it is part of our Open Ontario plan is extraordinarily exciting.

I certainly would invite the member to join us. I know that you were at the Prospectors and Developers Association convention in the last couple of days. We appreciate you being there—one of the most successful in years. The fact is, you heard from many people who were speaking about our government of Ontario's plan to support and promote the Ring of Fire development. So indeed, we want to have you onside for this.

This is something that needs to be managed in an appropriate fashion. In terms of our opportunities that we have, we are going to be working with our First Nation communities, working in terms of making sure it's environmentally sustainable. But there is no question—you can go down to the convention and meet with the many aboriginal leaders who are there. They're also very excited about the opportunities that are there.

This is about finding a way to take advantage of an opportunity that we haven't seen in the province of Ontario in 100 years, and I am just thrilled that our government is promoting its development.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, your government is so tired and so confused, you can't remember from day to day what you're saying and who you're saying it to. Who exactly are you trying to get to dial it back? Who are you trying to calm down? Who shouldn't get excited? Is it your environmentalist friends, to whom you promised no development, or is it the miners whom you promised more development, or is it the people of the north, who know the only shaft they're going to get is from this Liberal government?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: This is unquestionably one of the most exciting opportunities that we've seen in the province of Ontario, let alone northern Ontario, in a large number of years. It will be managed in a process that will help us move forward to make sure that the appropriate economic benefits come to First Nations communities and the many communities—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East, please come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: There is still much work to be done in terms of moving the project forward, but what's important to understand is that all groups, our First Nation leaders, our Métis communities, our aboriginal leaders all across the north, the communities—obviously all those representing northern Ontario are very excited about this. Len Crispino, president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, was speaking about what great opportunities it could have not just for northern Ontario but for all of Ontario.

We need you on board, quite frankly. We need everyone on board. This is an opportunity that our government and the Premier see as a very exciting opportunity, which is why that is part of the Open Ontario plan. We need your support; we need your help.

Quite frankly, I'll be going up to Marten Falls, Webeque and a few other communities next week to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Right now, the Sudbury Regional Hospital has 89 beds occupied by alternate-level-of-care—ALC—patients. Meanwhile, six patients are stuck in the emergency department because they can't find a bed for them. Many of the people who are now ALC patients could have been safely looked after at home if we had a robust home care system.

The throne speech made no mention of fixing home care. Instead, the government is continuing competitive-bidding privatized home care delivery. When will this government fix our home care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very proud of the improvements we've made in our home care system over

the past six and a half years. We've dramatically increased the investments we're making in home care. We've lifted the caps so that people can get the home care they need. We've invested over a billion dollars in our aging-at-home strategy, designed exactly to take the pressure off the hospitals.

We know there are too many people in hospital who actually do not need to be in hospital. That's why we're working very closely with our LHINs, with the CCACs and with our hospitals to find those right solutions so that people get the appropriate level of care as close to home as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: This money is not fixing our home care system. On Monday, the workers in Sudbury held a protest to deliver a message that our home care system is broken. The workers work mainly on call. They make just over minimum wage. Competitive bidding makes it impossible for home care providers to recruit and retain a stable workforce.

The government is wasting health care dollars treating patients in hospitals across this province who could be taken care of more humanely and effectively at home. This is a huge problem—17% of all our hospital beds.

When will the McGuinty government realize that fixing home care means getting rid of the competitive-bidding privatized home care model and that the most effective and humane way of meeting the health care needs of our aging population is a robust home care system?

1130

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me repeat: We are absolutely committed to making the right investments so that people who need care in this province get the care they need in the most appropriate place.

We are actively working to strengthen the continuum of care so that people can move back home from the hospital when they have completed the acute episode of care that they need, with the right supports; they can move into supportive housing; they can, if necessary, move into long-term care.

I can tell you that our government has made addressing the alternate-level-of-care—ALC—pressures that our hospitals face a top priority. We're making the right investments, and we're making progress. It's critically important for our hospitals; it's also critically important for the people of this province, particularly our seniors.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question today for the Minister of Labour. Minister, lifting equipment is used across a variety of business sectors in my own community of Oakville and throughout Ontario. Many employers and workers see them just as a simple way to move materials. They use them as a routine part of their jobs.

All members of this House would realize that their improper operation poses real dangers to our province's workers. Forklifts and other lifting devices continue to be

a significant cause of potential serious worker injury and sometimes death. Would the minister tell this House, and workers and employers in Ontario, what his ministry is doing to ensure the health and safety of forklift operators in the province?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for Oakville for the question.

At the Ministry of Labour, we are always working to make our workplaces in the province that much safer. For example, we've just recently completed a blitz of forklifts and other lifting devices. During this enforcement campaign, inspectors visited various sectors, including retail, warehouses, wholesale, transportation and the automotive sector, where forklift-related incidents have mostly occurred. This is the second blitz. We did one last year; we targeted forklifts. During last year's blitz, industrial inspectors made almost 1,300 visits to workplaces in Ontario.

I look forward to reviewing the results of this year's enforcement blitz campaign. With this blitz and with every blitz, we're reaching more Ontario workers and making our workplaces that much—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: That sounds like a comprehensive approach that Ontario workers want.

Ontario workers and employers need to know that your ministry is striving to protect and look out for the health and safety of Ontario workers. Our workers deserve jobs that allow them to not only take care of their families but also to return home safely at the end of each day.

I understand that this blitz is only one of the many that the ministry is conducting and that it's part of a broader workplace health and safety strategy. In fact, I've been told, Minister, that this is the 18th blitz conducted by the Ministry of Labour since you launched your Safe at Work Ontario campaign in June 2008.

Would the minister please expand for the House upon other safety blitzes that are currently taking place in Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again I thank the member for the question. The member is absolutely correct: This blitz is one in a long line that the ministry has conducted in our proactive approach to workplace safety.

There are more to come, because blitzes work. Our blitzes heighten awareness for workers and for employers. They're instrumental in identifying hazards before they turn into disasters and tragedies. Our inspectors' proactive enforcement encourages everyone to evaluate the risks in their own workplaces.

Safe at Work Ontario is not only about enforcement and compliance; it's about a partnership with employers, workers, health and safety associations, governments and all Ontarians as we work to improve the health and safety of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LAND REGISTRY SYSTEM

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. Minister, earlier today you gave a very dismissive response to my question dealing with Bill 152. You suggested that owners did not have to take any action dealing with rights-of-way registered on title prior to 1967. I have letters from your members in your caucus saying quite the opposite.

Minister, will you stand in the House today and commit and promise that the owners of properties who are questioning these rights-of-way registered on title will not have to pay one cent to your Liberal-friendly lawyers to re-establish their rights-of-way to their properties?

Will you stand in the House today and answer that question? That's all I want.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me be very clear about what we are trying to do here. The land registry records are manual right now and we are trying to automate them. Whatever is in the records at this point in time is exactly what is being automated—nothing less, nothing more, so the records stay the same. That's what our position is right now. That's what is in the legislation. If anything is registered in the manual records right now, it will be automated the same way.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It is my pleasure to introduce on behalf of page Haleigh Ryan from Palgrave her grandparents, Alice and Steven Ryan, her mother, Barbara, and her little brother, Steven. Thank you very much for coming this afternoon.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce my wife, Pari, my daughter, Michelle, and my granddaughters, Sabrina and Sara, who are visiting the House.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DEFIBRILLATION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm proud to rise in the Legislature today to recognize individuals and organizations in the riding of Cambridge who have made it possible to save lives by having defibrillators placed in 76 elementary schools in Waterloo region.

Dr. Shekhar Pandey of the Cambridge Cardiac Care Centre, together with representatives from the Ontario Heart and Stroke Foundation, Philips Electronics and the region of Waterloo emergency medical services shared this gift of life at a press conference last Friday, all done without federal or provincial funding.

There are now a total of 211 of these life-saving devices in public buildings across Waterloo region. In the past two years, they've been used six times after people collapsed at an arena or a public event. Three lives were saved. Were it not for the defibrillators, the survival rate would probably have been nil.

I congratulate and commend Dr. Pandey and the others involved in expanding this important life-saving initiative in our community.

UNITED WAY OF LONDON AND MIDDLESEX

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would like to commend the United Way of London and Middlesex for raising over \$7.6 million in donations for the London-Middlesex community. The United Way had exceeded their projected target of \$7.4 million and plans on investing the funds in organizations and programs that will benefit our communities.

I would like to note that over 100% of the money raised by United Way has come from unionized workplaces, the manufacturing sector and communities that have borne the brunt of the recession. It is inspiring and heartwarming that our community always helps those in need under any circumstances.

The United Way will make a contribution of \$6.5 million to various London-Middlesex service providers this year. A number of these organizations include the Boys and Girls Club of London, the children's aid society, the Daya Counselling Centre and Community Living London.

Their success in mobilizing the community and giving back to those in need is truly amazing. They are an example and an inspiration for other community organizations, and I commend and congratulate all those involved for a job well done.

I want to thank all the people who participate and donate for a good cause.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to read this statement.

GROVES MEMORIAL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Mr. Ted Arnott: On Monday, just before the throne speech, I tabled a very important motion, the very first motion introducing this new legislative session:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should acknowledge the strong and long-standing community support for a new Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Centre Wellington and immediately provide the hospital with its requested planning grant, and allow it to move forward to the next stage of approval."

This motion makes a direct and specific request. It says that something reasonable and sensible needs to be done now. We have the LHIN's endorsement, which arrived just before Christmas. As long ago as last June,

the Premier was talking about releasing a 10-year construction plan for hospitals, but last week when I asked during question period when the government would unveil this plan, they refused to answer. Do they actually have an honest planning process, or are they just giving communities the runaround?

Our community expects to see progress, not hear excuses. We all know about the deficit, but we also know that they spent \$1 billion on eHealth with little to show for it. Groves needs the go-ahead. It's obvious that this government has trouble setting priorities, but maybe it could change its ways. It could start by recognizing the need to support local health care and undertake to do what my motion asks.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I stand in the House today to recognize the victims of Chile's earthquake and tsunami and to call on Ontarians to support the rebuilding efforts.

As many of you already know, the destruction in Chile was immense. The tsunami destroyed port cities, villages, homes and fishing boats along a 1,000-kilometre coastline. The main industrial corridor of Concepción, Huachipato, Lota and Coronel, which includes mining processing centres and factories, was hit hard. The north-south route—the main transport road in the country—was severely damaged. Thirty-nine hospitals were destroyed.

My wife, Evelyn Murialdo, is Chilean-Canadian, and many members of our family live in Chile. We've heard from them about how the people of Chile have come together and are undertaking tremendous efforts to rebuild, but they can't do it alone.

I've been working in collaboration with the Consul General of Chile, with Scadding Court, an outstanding agency known for its community development work in Toronto as well as their international work, and with the coalition Chile CAN Rise. Together, we would like to extend an invitation to all MPPs and civil servants to join us at 7 p.m. tonight outside here at Queen's Park for a candlelight vigil. Speakers will include the Consul General of Chile and Pablo Vivanco of Chile CAN Rise.

However, I would like to encourage everyone here to consider donating money to the relief efforts. Donations can be sent to Scadding Court to the attention of the Earthquake Relief Fund. Scadding Court will collect the donations on behalf of Un Techo para Chile, a key organization in the rebuilding efforts. The Chilean consulate in Toronto will acknowledge your support at an event it will be hosting with Scadding Court on April 29 at the Plaza Flamingo. For further information, go to chilecanrise.ca.

WARDEN WOODS COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to speak about an organization that is doing wonderful things for the people of my riding of Scarborough Southwest. Warden Woods Community Centre has been an integral

part of community life in Scarborough Southwest for some 30 years.

This agency was created to serve the local community by providing services and support to help residents deal with the challenges of daily life while providing a place for all to gather and participate in many activities that help foster a sense of community.

Warden Woods Community Centre is largely supported by the United Way. It's primarily focused on making a difference in the lives of people in both small and big ways.

I'm proud to stand here today and say that the McGuinty government has been a strong supporter of Warden Woods. In six separate locations, programs range in scope from children's hip hop classes to Meals on Wheels, support for seniors and drop-in programs for the homeless.

Presently Warden Woods Community Centre, like the Scarborough Southwest community, is changing to accommodate and support the changing ethnocultural character of the community. This resulted in the creation of programming geared to reach out to new Canadians who otherwise would have nowhere else to turn.

In addition to this, greater programming focus has been placed on providing activities that cater to the needs of individuals with physical challenges, by offering them the opportunity to partake in activities that serve to address their needs for recreation and fun.

Lastly, I would like to express how fortunate my riding of Scarborough Southwest is for having such a fine institution, which does such noble and necessary work.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. John O'Toole: My riding of Durham is encouraged to learn that the GO train service could be extended east to Bowmanville by 2013. The problem with this is that we've heard similar promises before and we're still waiting. In fact, I have grown rather skeptical of the Liberal promises. Residents of Durham riding want to take public transit; however, this is difficult without a permanent commuter rail link to the rest of the GTA.

The throne speech promised \$32 billion in infrastructure funding. I would urge the government to ensure that a fair share of transit funding is allocated to the GO Transit east extension to Durham.

Metrolinx estimates that traffic congestion costs their area \$6 billion every year through delays and lost productivity. Extending GO train service to Durham means more jobs, more opportunities and reduced gridlock. This government needs to put the east extension of GO transit on the fast track.

1510

One additional suggestion I might make to the Minister of Finance is to implement my private member's bill that offers a transit tax credit for those receiptable expenses for the purpose of using transit. Just adopt it, as the federal government has done. This will make transit affordable and assure more ridership.

When you see these plans that are offered in these throne speeches, you have to have confidence that the Premier is going to deliver. We just ask him to make sure that Durham gets its fair share of transit funding in the next budget.

MEMBERS' CONDUCT

Mr. Dave Levac: On Monday, the Lieutenant Governor performed an important function in our Legislature: He read the speech from the throne, which outlined our government's vision for our province. The role of the Lieutenant Governor in reading the speech from the throne is a long-standing, time-honoured tradition in our Legislature, and he and his office should be treated with the respect and esteem due his role as the vice-regal representative of our province. He represents the Queen.

Unfortunately, some members of this Legislature chose to ignore this, and behaved in a way that I believe embarrassed our Legislature on Monday. I was deeply dismayed to see some members laughing and heckling while the Lieutenant Governor read the speech from the throne.

It should also be noted that this regrettable behaviour was entirely unnecessary. Yesterday, the official opposition was accorded time to state their views and give their official response to the speech from the throne in the House, and they also had media studio time immediately following the Lieutenant Governor's delivery of the speech to express their views. There was no need to resort to such disrespectful behaviour.

That's why I am calling on the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition to instruct his members who behaved so rudely to apologize to the Lieutenant Governor, to all Ontarians and to all members of this House for their disrespectful actions. Unfortunately, based on the actions of some, I won't hold my breath.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Durham, it's not helpful.

Members' statements?

ANNIVERSARY OF LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I rise to ask all members of the Legislature to help us to celebrate a very special day in the history of a country called Lithuania.

Twenty one years ago, in 1989, two million people linked hands across the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to form a human chain spanning over 600 kilometres. This captivating and stunning campaign for freedom, organized by the Baltic pro-independence movements, was known as the Baltic Way, and has been documented in a photo exhibit by the same name. The peaceful protest resonated globally as a remarkable

demonstration of people and their power. Six months later, Lithuania became the first Baltic state to declare independence from the Soviet Union.

Ambassador of Lithuania Gintė Damušis and Consul General Paul Kuras can be proud of the accomplishments of Lithuanians right here in Canada, because they have never forgotten their homeland and what it meant to be a Lithuanian in the diaspora.

I can remember, 32 years ago, as a young councillor of the city of Toronto, standing in the snow and seeing tears streaming down their eyes and down their cheeks when they saw the flag of an independent Lithuania being hoisted. It left an impression on me, and the impression was that I will always stand with them until I can no more and until the independence of Lithuania has been achieved.

Tomorrow, as we raise the flag of Lithuania, I would ask all members to please come and join with me to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Lithuanian independence.

VU PHAM

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I rise in tribute to the OPP officer, Constable Vu Pham, who was killed violently in the line of duty on Monday. I want to express our deepest sympathies to Constable Pham's wife and three young sons.

Constable Pham served as an OPP officer for 15 years in Cochrane, Parry Sound and Huron county, daily doing his best to keep our communities safe. Living in the small town of Wingham, Constable Pham was a well-known member of this close-knit community. Those who knew him best—his friends, neighbours and colleagues—remember him as a wonderful friend, a gentleman, but most as a devoted husband and father.

He was respected not just for his duties as a police officer, but for his many contributions to the community as well. Constable Pham was a dedicated volunteer and coach of his sons' hockey and soccer teams, a deacon in the Wingham Pentecostal Church, and an avid outdoorsman who loved to spend time with his three sons hunting and fishing.

I also want to send our condolences to the officers of the Huron OPP detachment and police officers from across Ontario as they mourn the loss of their colleague, and also to thank them for the risks they take each day to keep Ontario safe.

The following is A Police Officer's Prayer:

Lord I ask for courage

Courage to face and
Conquer my own fears ...

Courage to take me
Where others will not go ...

I ask for strength

Strength of body to protect others
And strength of spirit to lead others ...

I ask for dedication

Dedication to my job, to do it well
Dedication to my community
To keep it safe ...

Give me Lord, concern
For others who trust me
And compassion for those who need me ...

And please Lord

Through it all
Be at my side ...

Speaker, I would ask for a moment of silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and our guests to join us in a moment of silence in tribute to the fallen officer.

The House observed a moment's silence.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy: I beg leave to present a report on pre-budget consultation 2010 from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE AND ELDERLY PEOPLE

FROM ABUSE ACT

(POWERS OF ATTORNEY), 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PROTECTION

DES PERSONNES VULNÉRABLES

ET DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES

CONTRE LES MAUVAIS TRAITEMENTS

(PROCURATIONS)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 3, An Act to amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 with respect to powers of attorney / Projet de loi 3, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui en ce qui a trait aux procurations.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John O'Toole: The bill is intended to protect vulnerable and elderly persons from abuse by the misuse of the power of attorney. The bill amends sections 10 to 48 of the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992, and strengthens the continuing power of attorney for property and personal care. Its intent is to protect vulnerable people from being misused in terms of misappropriation of their care or resources.

OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'OMBUDSMAN

Mr. Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act / Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Of course I use the explanatory note attached to the bill for this statement, as has been agreed upon by this House. Currently, under the Ombudsman Act, the Ombudsman's term of office is five years and the Ombudsman may be reappointed for further terms. The bill amends the act to provide that the term of office is 10 years and to prohibit reappointment.

BILL OF RIGHTS FOR PUPILS WITH DIABETES, 2010

CHARTRE DES DROITS DES ÉLÈVES DIABÉTIQUES DE 2010

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to establish a bill of rights for pupils with diabetes / Projet de loi 5, Loi établissant une charte des droits pour les élèves diabétiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Dave Levac: In the spirit of the member from Welland, if passed, this bill would set out various rights that a pupil with diabetes disabilities has with respect to caring for his or her diabetes while at school.

CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SENSIBILISATION AUX CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES

Mr. McNeely moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to increase awareness of climate change / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant à augmenter la sensibilisation aux changements climatiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Phil McNeely: This bill is intended to name April 21 of every year, the day before Earth Day, Climate Change Awareness Day. The indicators include the lowest level of Arctic ice cover for the year, the population of polar bears in Canada and the greenhouse gas production of our province and our country. Our youth understand climate change and the need to take action, and this report card to our youth will help them inform their parents and take leadership in the decades to come.

CONSUMER REPORTING AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT LE CONSOMMATEUR

Mr. Ruprecht moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: The crime of identity theft is rolling across North America at an ever-increasing rate. This bill is entitled to do something about this, and it provides that, were a consumer reporting agency and any other person, such as a bank, to whom a consumer report has been provided to discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information or that such information has been lost or stolen, they shall immediately inform the affected consumer. I hope that this bill will stop identity theft in its tracks.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 5 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the meeting times of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House of May 1, 2008, respecting the meeting times for committees, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs shall be authorized to meet, in addition to its regular meeting time, on Wednesday, March 31, 2010, from 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 236, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE DE LA FEMME

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated to each party to speak on International Women's Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise today in the House to acknowledge International Women's Day, which we celebrated on March 8 as part of International Women's Week, occurring this year from March 7 to 13.

Ontario is filled with accomplished women. Women are the backbone of their families and of Ontario's communities.

On International Women's Day, countries around the world celebrate women—past, present and future—and together we raise awareness about the continuing struggle for women's equality and vow to break down the remaining barriers.

The global theme of International Women's Day 2010 is "Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all." In Canada, we celebrate "Strong Women. Strong Canada. Strong World."

Pendant la Journée internationale de la femme, des pays un peu partout dans le monde célèbrent les femmes : celles du passé, du présent et de l'avenir. Ensemble, nous faisons prendre conscience des luttes qui se poursuivent pour l'égalité des femmes, et nous faisons vœu de briser les barrières qui subsistent.

Au Canada, nous célébrons le thème « Force des femmes. Force du Canada. Force du monde ». En 2010, la Journée internationale de la femme a pour thème « Mêmes droits, mêmes chances : progrès pour tous ».

But no matter what the theme, International Women's Day is a symbol for change and progress. It's about the social, political and economic advancement of women; raising awareness about issues of gender inequality and the work that remains to be done; and being pragmatic about the opportunity to achieve more.

While we reflect on the progress already made to help women achieve their full participation in society, we recognize and appreciate the important work that women do every day, and we take pride in what has been accomplished and take action on what is yet to attain.

While we have come a long way, there is much more to do. Many issues, such as violence and poverty, remain unresolved.

Bien que les femmes se joignent au monde du travail en nombre record, élèvent des enfants et participent au sein de leurs communautés, il leur reste encore aujourd'hui des barrières à surmonter.

Today, as women join the labour force in record numbers, raise families and participate in their communities, barriers remain.

On the same note, I am proud of our government's accomplishments in advancing the well-being of women in Ontario, especially for victims of violence and those who face financial hardship.

We have taken steps to ensure that women have the opportunity to gain skills and jobs in all sectors of the economy, learn new skills, change careers and get higher-paying jobs. Our government is helping with supports that enable them to enter the workforce knowing that their children are well cared for. We have expanded access to child care and are moving forward on full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds.

Further, we will be able to provide wraparound care, making it easier for parents, and women in particular, to balance their responsibilities as mothers while ensuring that they are able to enter the workforce.

Our government is undertaking a number of initiatives that will increase awareness and improve supports for women who are the victims of violence, including initiatives specific to Ontario's aboriginal women.

For women to reach their full potential and obtain economic independence for themselves and their children, the proper supports must be in place. Women have a right to equal and full participation in our society. I believe that by doing more to protect women from violence and build women's economic independence, we build stronger, safer and more vital communities.

1530

Les femmes ont le droit de participer également et pleinement dans notre société. Je crois qu'en faisant davantage pour protéger les femmes contre la violence et favoriser l'autonomie financière des femmes, nous bâtissons des collectivités plus fortes, plus sûres et plus dynamiques. Cela est, en fin de compte, le sens de la Journée internationale de la femme.

Ultimately, that is the meaning of International Women's Day.

In closing, I want to thank the women from all walks of life in Ontario who are helping to create strong

communities through their remarkable achievements in their workplace, in their communities and in their homes.

Happy International Women's Day.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, because it is a pleasure and an honour each time, each year, to celebrate with my colleagues from all three parties.

Canadians have stepped forward to celebrate this week the progress that has been made by women toward equality and also toward full participation. It's also an opportunity to reflect on the challenges and the barriers that remain, and to consider future steps to achieve equality for all women in all aspects of their lives.

This year, the theme in Canada is "Strong Women. Strong Canada. Strong World." That emphasizes the need to continue to focus on increasing women's participation in and access to leadership roles and opportunities, and making sure that every female in this province and country has the opportunity to achieve her full potential and to help build a stronger and more prosperous Canada.

I would say to you that much has been done. Women have made great strides. We're seeing participation in pretty well every aspect of Canadian life. Currently, women make up the majority of full-time students in most university faculties. Certainly, their participation in the workforce has increased. In 2007—the most recent statistic—women made up 35% of all self-employed individuals.

What is an area where we need to do some more? We've just gone through the Olympics, and I would have to say to you—I want to just reflect on women and athletics. We were able to see some outstanding Canadian women, who won our hearts as they displayed their skill both on the hill and at the rink. Some people have wondered why the women did as well as they did. The women did win 14½ medals out of a 26-medal total. The half refers to the skating duo of Scott and Tessa.

I'm going to refer to an article by Debra Black on February 25. Part of the reason that we saw women doing as well as they did is because I think the Olympic committee has gone a long way to try to ensure gender equity in its Canadian Olympic programming.

I want to quote Bruce Kidd, a former Olympic runner and the dean of the faculty of physical education and health at the University of Toronto, who says that women have always had a strong performance at the Olympics "dating back to 1928 when the women's track and field team scored the most points overall." But he goes on to say that part of the reason women perform so well, in his estimation, is because they're focused on achievement at the Olympics because there is, as he says, "a dearth of professional sports" opportunities, "other than golf and tennis, for them to put their energies into." So, for them, the Olympics are the pinnacle. They want to make sure that they can be the best that they can be. Men, of course, have opportunities to excel in sports. If we take a look, there's hockey, baseball, lacrosse, basketball and football. Women don't have those same opportunities, and so

for them, this is the pinnacle of athleticism that they can participate in.

So we see women working hard—that is what they believe is one of the reasons women do so well. Although there is lots of opportunity for participation in this province and in this country, there is not so much in comparison to males. I just want to point that out.

We are proud of the women who worked hard to achieve success in their sport at the Olympics. I would like to say to you that they do serve as outstanding role models for young women in this province and in this country. Again, it's an indication that women have made great progress, but I think it's also an indication of the fact that there is always a little more that we need to do.

I want to congratulate all those who have supported women in achieving equality and achieving leadership opportunities. We've got a great province and country, and we will all continue to work together—men and women—to make it is the best it can be.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of New Democrats to speak about International Women's Day, which was a couple of days ago. International Women's Day is our chance to celebrate all the people who have led the way over the years in the struggle to create a society that promotes things like social justice, equality, diversity and tolerance between men and women. We know that many people have been involved in that struggle; certainly many women, and some men as well.

It's also a chance for us to recognize the real progress that women have made toward equality. I say "progress toward equality," because unfortunately we know that it is not quite equal yet between men and women in Ontario or in Canada. It wasn't so long ago, in fact, that women were told they couldn't have a career, that that was not something a woman should have in her life, let alone having women actually run for public office.

We have made some progress—progress that we're proud of today, absolutely—but we need to recognize that as a society we still have quite a distance to go. Sadly, there is a lot more work to do when it comes to equality for women.

Women in Ontario have been especially hard hit with the global recession. We know that when an economic downturn takes place, that negative economic atmosphere hits women very, very hard. Often, women end up carrying the burden of the household income on their own, and yet they do that still earning less than men earn.

These days in 2010, about 75 cents on the dollar is what women earn compared to what men earn. Women of colour and aboriginal women are particularly affected by wage disparities. Women are more likely to live in poverty, even when they're working. More than 70% of people earning minimum wage in this province are women. Most of those are immigrant women, visible minority women from racialized communities.

Right now, a new crisis in child care in this province is also leaving working moms wondering how they're going to get child care for their children, how they're

going to afford to even go to work without subsidized child care, which we know is in a crisis state here in the province. In fact, our caucus had the pleasure of talking to some child care workers today about the serious situation in this province with a government that refuses to fund child care, even though it is a provincial responsibility.

These are the kinds of things that women in Ontario face each and every day. It's the job of this government and of everyone in this chamber to make sure that there is real equality in this province, not further disparity. That's what their job is on the government side; that's what our job is on the opposition side as well.

1540

Unfortunately, we are seeing more and more poor decisions coming forward from this government, and they disproportionately are affecting women. There's an assault on social services. When that happens, women are most impacted. When child care spending is slashed, it creates a roadblock for women looking to re-enter the workforce as daycare costs rise. We know that women are more likely to be the ones to care for an elderly parent, so when we see cuts to home care and when we see long-term-care beds that are not available, we know that the burden of caring for our family members as they age ends up on the back of a woman.

When schools close, women are the ones who end up taking their children further and further to get to the school that is remaining open. Fundraising happens in schools because the government is not funding them at appropriate levels. Who do you think is doing that fundraising? The vast majority of it is being done by women.

It's women, it's moms who are being affected by the policies of this government in a negative way.

As New Democrats, we believe fundamentally in fairness. I would suggest that this government needs to take a real hard look at how to make life more fair for women in Ontario.

I'm going to end by quoting Agnes Macphail, a woman who stood in this very chamber. What she said is, "Never apologize. Never explain. Just get the thing done, and let them howl."

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to remind the people of Ontario of a few things that were in the throne speech. These petitions were presented to me. They read as follows:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and

businesses buy" and use every day. Just a few examples are: "coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services;" home care; "veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements"—the list goes on; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs"—up to—" \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on ... hard-working families and businesses" when they can least afford it.

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and hand it to Quinton, one of the pages, on his last few days here.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Save Our Child Care! Ontario Faces Dramatic Cuts to Subsidies

"Whereas in the 2006 budget, the McGuinty government allocated \$63.5 million for child care for each of the next four years. Each year since, \$63.5 million went to support our vital child care services;

"Whereas if the province does not continue this funding in the 2010 provincial budget, municipalities will have no option but to make dramatic cuts to child care subsidies, destabilizing the entire system;

"Therefore, be it resolved in the 2010 budget, we call on Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan to:

"(1) Ensure the province provides sufficient funding to maintain existing levels of child care service, and recognize cost-of-living and other legitimate increases in operating costs; and

"(2) Provide all necessary tools to support the transition to an early learning program, including base funding for child care programs to support operations and wages comparable to the full-day learning program, in order to ensure the child care system remains stable and sustainable."

I am in agreement and will sign my name thereto.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition was sent to me by a group of people on Symington Avenue who want to stop unlawful firearms in vehicles. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the growing number of unlawful firearms in motor vehicles is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers;

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned citizens, strongly request and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2009, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving unlawful firearms in our communities."

Since I agree with the petition wholeheartedly, I am certainly delighted to sign my name to it. I'm going to give it to legislative page Julia to present it to you right now.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have petitions provided to me by Ms. I.K. Raymond of Kitchener and Michelle Freeman of Kitchener, which read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again on Canada Day 2010 with his new combined 13% GST, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% combined GST will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines, gas at the pumps, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, arena ice and soccer field rentals, Internet fees, theatre admissions, massage therapy, funerals, condo fees, courier fees, fast food sold for under \$4, bus fares, golf green fees, gym fees, snowplowing, bicycles, taxi fares, train fares, domestic air travel, accountant and legal services, and real estate commissions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government recognize Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

Pursuant to the standing orders, I affix my name thereto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario expect this Legislature to be a model of decorum and respect; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario expect members of the Legislature to conduct themselves at all times with dignity and to at all times show respect for our treasured institutions, including"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Is that petition certified by the table?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I think it's certified.

Interjection: I don't think so.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It must be certified by the table.

Petitions? Member from Ottawa—Orléans.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—this is from Calvin Wilson students Terah-Rose Labelle, Robyn Burman, Kristal Church and many others:

"Whereas the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 2007 report, concluded that without dramatic reductions in human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, climate change may bring 'abrupt and irreversible effects on oceans, glaciers, land, coastlines and species'; and

"Whereas no one group, country or continent is responsible for climate change, but where all human beings are collectively responsible for solving the problem; and

"Whereas the production of greenhouse gases in Canada has increased by 27% over 1990 levels; and

"Whereas our elected leaders have a responsibility to report to the public on their actions with respect to halting climate change for the sake of accountability; and

"Whereas youth in particular have a special interest in this issue, being those that will inherit this earth, our only home;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario swiftly pass Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change."

I will put my signature to this petition and send it up with Daria.

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's plan to harmonize the PST and the GST will result in Ontario taxpayers paying 8% more for a multitude of products and services; and

"Whereas the 8% tax increase will increase the cost of services such as housing and real estate services, gasoline, hydro bills, home heating fuel, Internet and cable bills, haircuts, gym memberships, legal services, construction and renovations, car repairs, plumbing and electrical services, landscaping services, leisure activities, hotel rooms, veterinary services for the family pet and even funeral services; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers cannot afford this tax grab—particularly in the middle of a recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to

abandon the sales tax increase announced in the 2009 budget.”

As I am in complete agreement, I have affixed my signature and given it to page Jordan.

1550

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This is a petition to the Parliament of Ontario. It's about a total ban on handguns. It reads as follows:

“Whereas only police officers require handguns to do their job; and

“Whereas handguns are the weapons of choice of drug dealers and criminals; and

“Whereas we have lost too many people to handgun violence; and

“Whereas there is no reason to have a handgun in a home, car or on a person in the city of Toronto;

“We, the undersigned residents, support and request a total ban of all handguns in Toronto and the province of Ontario.”

I agree with the stop-the-handgun movement in Toronto, and I will sign my name to this petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition provided to me by Fred Spitzig, the owner of The Blitz, a club in Cambridge, which reads:

“Petition to stop the HST on gym memberships:

“On March 26, 2009, the Ontario government announced the introduction of a single harmonized sales tax (HST) on July 1, 2010.

“However, the implementation of this tax will cause an 8% increase in the cost of gym memberships, such as The Blitz memberships. It is well documented that a regular routine of strength and cardio training combined with balanced nutrition can prevent or significantly lower the risk of developing many diseases, thereby lowering the need for medical attention for the treatment of those diseases, and thereby reducing provincial health care costs. The proposed tax may generate funds for the provincial government, but lead to greater costs in health care and poorer health for Ontarians who cannot afford the increased cost of their memberships.

“We, the undersigned, feel it is unfair to tax people for getting fit and building a healthier Ontario.

“We call on the Legislature of Ontario to stop the intended introduction of the harmonized sales tax on fitness memberships.”

Pursuant to the standing orders, I affix my name thereto.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier today, the member for Ottawa Centre

tried to introduce a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

“Whereas the people of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I have to read this petition—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, you're not going to read the petition, because it's a petition that has not been certified by the table. I will not allow the petition to be read into the record, and I will continue to stand here and not allow that petition to be read into the record. I do not believe that it has been certified by the table, and I'm not going to rule on a petition that has not been certified by the table.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The Clerk has indicated to me that she will not certify the petition, as she does not feel that it falls within the authority of the Speaker. I do believe that it does fall within your authority, Mr. Speaker, as we are asking for you to seek an apology from the opposition for the behaviour that they demonstrated, which was in violation of standing order 23(1).

“In a debate”—granted, this is not a debate, but during the speech from the throne on Monday—an opposition “member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she speaks disrespectfully of Her Majesty or any of the royal family, or the Governor General, or the administrator of Canada, or the Lieutenant Governor, or the administrator”—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member that during the delivery of the throne speech, the Speaker is not in the chair of the House. The chair was occupied by the Lieutenant Governor. I have no authority to intervene in the proceedings when the Lieutenant Governor is occupying this chair.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Respectfully, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This is a regrettable incident. I'm loathe to see the table brought into this type of debate. It's a regrettable sort of thing. Perhaps, Speaker, this matter could be discussed after today's proceedings in an effort to resolve concerns that people might have. Quite frankly, I suspect it would be more appropriately done by way of a discussion after today's proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To the honourable member, I would very much welcome, as I have commented before, a discussion to take place amongst the members regarding petitions because there are petitions that—in this case—I do not think are appropriately delivered in this House. Quite honestly there are no rules. Somebody could stand up and have a petition that is 15 minutes long and use the whole period for petitions.

I would welcome a discussion to take place with the House leaders. If the matter is of importance to the members, let's forward this to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and undertake a comprehensive review of petitions and the delivery of petitions within the chamber.

Petitions? Member from Peterborough.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today that has been certified.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 2007 report, concluded that without dramatic reductions in human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, climate change may bring 'abrupt and irreversible effects on oceans, glaciers, land, coastlines and species;' and

"Whereas no one group, country or continent is responsible for climate change, but where all human beings are collectively responsible for solving the problem; and

"Whereas the production of greenhouse gases in Canada has increased by 27% over 1990 levels; and

"Whereas our elected leaders have a responsibility to report to the public on their actions with respect to halting climate change for the sake of accountability; and

"Whereas youth in particular have a special interest in this issue, being those that will inherit this earth, our only home.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario swiftly pass Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change."

I'm presenting this petition on behalf of Kareen Wilson, and I will affix my signature to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 10, 2010, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to the government motion, which is of course the throne speech that we heard the other day.

When I go across this province, when I travel Ontario, the one thing that I hear constantly and consistently from the families I speak to is this: They're worried. People are worried in this province. They're worried about the well-being of themselves and the well-being of their families, and they're worried about the future of this very great province that they call home.

Ontarians know that times are tough and that these particular times are like no times we've ever seen in our recent history. They recognize that the scope of the challenge before us is quite great, but they expect their government to rise to the challenge. They expect their government to make a difference because, in the depths of this recession, families are counting on their elected leaders for solutions that will support them more than ever before.

There's no question that this is not an easy challenge, but it's a challenge to which the government must rise because Ontario families need help and they deserve to get that help.

The Ontarians my colleagues and I have spoken with since Monday's throne speech tell me they have no problem with some of the language in the throne speech, but what they were really shocked about was what wasn't in the throne speech. What Ontarians are really shocked and dismayed at, which is truly telling about this government's real priorities, are the things that the government did not include in Monday's throne speech. In fact, what worries me the most is the stark absence of any reference whatsoever to the very real challenges that are facing so many Ontarians today; that there was no remark whatsoever in the throne speech about how families are struggling.

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It's clear what Ontarians were looking for in this week's speech. They were looking for a plan to create more jobs; they were looking for some help in their retirement—a plan to protect our health care and to make life more affordable.

Unfortunately, what we saw amounts to lots of talk but little action.

On the issues that families are telling us really matter, Ontarians saw absolutely no commitment by this government to take action.

Do you know what? We don't disagree. Talking about developing water expertise and establishing long-term plans to strengthen Toronto's position as a global financial centre: These are worthy points of discussion. We would agree with that. But what this government chose to focus on in its throne speech entirely ignores what should be the immediate and obvious task at hand, and that is helping the Ontario families who need help now.

This government had a responsibility to prove it's able to both walk and chew gum, to address the challenges that so many families in this province are facing today. Blue-sky rhetoric and lofty schemes may make a government look like it's keeping busy, but all the hot air in the world is not going to comfort a family that is struggling just to pay the heating bill. In fact, there's nothing—there's nothing at all—in this government's throne speech that will help families make ends meet in the difficult months that lie ahead.

There's nothing in the throne speech that will open emergency rooms that have already been closed and will hire nurses that are facing layoff. I remind the House that front-line health workers are being laid off and surgeries are being cancelled and deferred right now. That's happening right now, today, in communities across the province.

People are worried about their jobs right now. Older Ontarians are worried and anxious about their pensions. They're worried and anxious about their pensions right now.

The fact is, this province's near-term challenges could not be more painfully obvious, yet this government has chosen to neglect Ontario's immediate challenges almost

entirely in this sham of a speech from the throne. You can visit nearly any community in the province, and you'll hear the alarm bells going off. But what does the Premier do? He reaches out and he hits the snooze button.

Unfortunately, pretending a problem isn't there does not make it go away. Hiding under the covers isn't going to make the problems that Ontario families are facing go away. Avoiding having to deal with a problem by trying to change the channel, with vague and dubious plans that may see the light of day sometime in the distant future, doesn't make the problems that are actually before us here and now suddenly go away. As much as this government might like to believe it, ignoring problems doesn't make them go away.

The recipe for addressing today's challenges is finding pragmatic, workable, common-sense solutions to the very real challenges that are before us. It's not as if many of the answers aren't already there. In fact, Ontarians have been pretty clear about where they think this government should start, not with pie-in-the-sky ambitions that may find fruition when the recession is over and when the sky finally clears, but with the kind of level-headed ideas that have always made our province work.

In fact, the only thing Ontarians were looking for in this throne speech was just a little bit of common sense and some smarter thinking, such as:

- an Ontario jobs-first policy that would ensure that job creation incentives are used to build skills capacity here in the province, instead of what this government is doing, which is sending more money overseas;

- a buy-local approach to public procurement that would strengthen local economies and create jobs by keeping investment closer to home;

- proven health reforms that actually stop the cuts to our hospitals and save us money in the long run, starting, for example, with improvements to our home care system to ease the burden on hospitals, focusing on disease prevention, for example, and healthy living as well; and

- a pragmatic retirement plan, like the one that New Democrats have proposed, a common-sense plan that would actually give Ontarians the assurance of some stability and security as they age.

These ideas are only radical in that they are actually proven to work. They're the kinds of things that can deliver help when it's necessary and when it's actually needed, which is right now. These are the kinds of pragmatic things that this government should have been talking about in the throne speech. I'm dumbfounded as to why the government would craft a throne speech built entirely upon a collection of vague ideas that it may attempt to deploy in the future, when it should have been talking about the very real support Ontarians are looking for right now—today.

I know that the Premier loves to spin the yarn about how higher taxes are the way of the future. He loves to tell reporters that anyone who doesn't share his dubious vision for the future is somehow stuck in the past. But as much as things change, there are some things, really, that just don't.

Whatever the pace of change, people still need jobs. That's something that never changes. People still need jobs. They still need health care that they can rely on. They still need good schools for their kids, dignity for their aging parents, a cost of living that is fair and affordable, a helping hand when they need it. Unfortunately, these things don't seem to have a place in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. And if they do, I'd certainly like to know the reason this government will give for leaving them out of the throne speech.

There are other areas, too, that this government could look at and should have signalled for some action on in the throne speech, and I'm going to go through some of them in my remarks.

For example, we weren't alone in expecting that the government would finally move to increase transparency in this chamber. I'm not referring here to the fact that we've had to submit freedom-of-information requests just to find some of the most basic information about cost estimates related to the HST, although that is the case and everyone is quite aware of that. I'm talking specifically about the independent officers of the Legislature. Given the fundamentally important role they play in protecting the interests of the public, and given that Ontarians want to see some transparency in how they're hired and fired, apparently as the case may be, once and for all, why was there no mention of this in the throne speech?

We all agree that no government should be immune from independent oversight. In fact, that oversight is vital to upholding public confidence in a parliamentary democracy. It's for that reason that my colleague from the riding of Welland, Mr. Kormos, introduced new legislation that would provide an appropriate, transparent and truly independent process for the appointment of these very important officers of the Legislature. He just introduced that bill a few moments ago. It is legislation that I hope the government will actually support. But I'm left to wonder why the government was silent on this issue earlier in the week, given the public concern over how these independent officers are appointed.

It boils down to a throne speech that addresses not the things Ontarians have told us they need but a carefully scripted treatise to give the government more excuses simply to do whatever it wants. Unfortunately for Ontario families, Monday's throne speech has left them empty-handed.

I want to talk a little bit more about some of the things this government decided to leave out of the throne speech, because those happen to be the very things that Ontarians are really, truly concerned about: things like the immediate challenges to our health care.

This throne speech includes a lot of lofty talk about reforming Ontario's health care system but no language that offers any peace of mind for families and communities across Ontario—families that received a phone call during these past few weeks to tell them that the surgery they've been waiting for had been deferred or cancelled because the hospital was out of money.

There certainly were no words of comfort in the throne speech for the nurses and front-line health workers

across the province who have suddenly found themselves out of a job; no words at all about these lost jobs which, I remind the House, actually hurt Ontarians twice, once because of the job losses, which have a profound impact on local economies, and again because these kinds of health care workers, these kinds of health sector jobs also mean that a lower quality of care will be expected for our families and loved ones as these front-line health care service providers are axed.

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Unfortunately, the health care changes that the government speaks of in its throne speech have set the table to potentially make things even worse. It's the kind of language we're most accustomed to hearing in discussions around health care south of the border. It's a failed model that simply doesn't work. The changes the government speaks of could have devastating impacts on patients. Ontarians are already concerned that their community care is threatened, and there is simply no justification for the government's secretive approach to health care reform. The kind of opaque language this government uses in its throne speech does nothing to reassure Ontarians and only spurs more and more worry.

If the government had a good idea or has a good idea to genuinely strengthen health care, why won't they share it with Ontarians, with the experts in the field, with the opposition? What are they afraid of?

New Democrats have some substantial concerns about the shift in hospital funding. We are gravely concerned that this government is choosing to further pursue a failed model of competitive bidding and private care, just as they did in home care, just like they've done with private hospitals, hospitals that have delivered less for more public money. This isn't our criticism. This is the criticism of one of our other independent officers. The Auditor General was quite critical of the private model of funding hospital construction.

Ontarians need the highest quality of patient care that is available to families close to home. People want to get their care close to home, and they should be able to get their care close to home, but we're simply left to wonder what those proposed reforms that the government spoke of in the throne speech are going to actually mean. In fact, where Ontarians are looking for clear answers, the government is simply showing them much more confusion.

The government talks about accountability in health care but won't tell us what proposed new measures they have in mind and what those measures are truly all about. Will we see Ombudsman oversight of hospitals, for example, or is this government moving toward linking executive pay to patient outcomes? If the government truly was working to introduce meaningful transparency and accountability in our health care system, as New Democrats have long called for in numerous private members' bills and numerous motions, it should speak clearly and say so, but it shouldn't leave Ontarians to wonder. Health care in Ontario should be premised on providing the utmost quality, close-to-home care. What

we've heard in the throne speech hints at picking winners and losers and pitting people and communities against one another, a model that Ontarians have roundly rejected.

We still don't know what the full plan for this government's new hospital funding system is, because the government has refused to be clear about its intentions. Rather than sharing a clear plan with stakeholders, with the opposition and all Ontarians, the government has preferred to once again put politics first and roll out its so-called reforms in dribs and drabs. Ontarians don't know what's in store for them. They don't know what's in store for the health care system that they rely on, that they count on. It's simply an inexcusable way to launch a new model of hospital funding. Rather than open communication and consultation with the public, this government seems to be choosing to further open the door to American-style reforms—and shame on them for that. All the while, they're refusing to confirm or corroborate what they truly have in store for our health care system.

New Democrats are concerned. We're tying funding procedures—trying to put people's health problems in a box and solve them all separately. It seems to me a bit of a risky situation. Research shows that we have to take a holistic approach to people's health. This is what all the research shows, and yet this government is looking at parcelling off procedures and funding them all separately. In some cases, we fear people won't be able to get the kind of procedures they need without travelling significant distances. What we think the government should be doing is treating patients like people, not like widgets and not like problems.

Ontarians want excellent patient-based care, but we need to understand the system as a whole and not just pick out the procedures and health care facilities that will garner the most support. The road this government seems to be taking is going to have a devastating impact on smaller and rural hospitals, smaller community hospitals. We already see that happening in Ontario now. The very ones that have already had a number of cuts, had emergency rooms close in places like Port Colborne and Fort Erie, these are the very kinds of hospitals that will not do well with this government's plan.

Families in Ontario have been very clear, as have New Democrats: We simply don't want or need a health care system that picks winners and losers. Ontario's wounded health care system needs consistent policy, meaningful long-term planning and sustainable support.

The government says it will create an independent expert advisory panel. Well, New Democrats have long supported research and clinical guidelines, but the government hasn't yet been clear just what it plans to have this panel even do. Is it just a smokescreen for introducing a series of competitive mechanisms into our system, or is this actually a move toward higher quality care? We need to know how any new system of clinical guidelines will fit within the existing framework. What about the existing avenues for expert advice, such as the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences? This has been

in existence since 1992 and is the body responsible for clinical guidelines right now. So why the change? Why is this change being brought forward? What will it mean for Ontario?

The government is also proposing to review the Public Hospitals Act, but it won't tell Ontarians why or for what reason they're doing that. I can remind the House that New Democrats have proposed changes to the Public Hospitals Act ourselves dozens of times in the last number of years. Every single time that we brought these proposals forward, they were rejected by the government. This is a vital move if we are going to take on some of our hospital issues and if we're going to take them on seriously. There are some really major problems that people are experiencing in Ontario when it comes to their hospitals and the health care they get there, but the government, again, instead of being open and transparent, has chosen secrecy instead of a process that everyone can engage in.

The question becomes, will the government finally go far enough and recognize the contribution of all health professionals and community health partners? We know that nurses and midwives have long asked for changes to hospital advisory committees. These health professionals have told this government time and time again that if Ontario wants to get serious about full collaboration in our hospitals, the full spectrum of health care providers must be represented on these advisory committees.

Will the government clarify just what they're going to be reviewing, or will this just be a quick move to ram through changes the government knows most Ontarians are going to oppose instead of dealing with the real problems? They need to be part of any discussion about meaningful long-term changes to our health care system.

If this government wants to talk about efficiencies in health care, it should start by cleaning up its own house. I note that the throne speech contained no mention of any promise to stop directing scarce public dollars away from the pockets of the government's friends and into front-line care, where it's truly, truly needed.

The lack of meaningful language on protecting Ontario's health care system is perhaps eclipsed only by the complete absence of any real action on pensions and jobs. At a time when thousands of people have received pink slips, Ontarians expected to hear details of a real plan to get people back to work, to get this province back to work. Unfortunately, that's not what Ontario families heard on Monday. The vision in this government's throne speech is too rooted in giving up control of Ontario's economy to large outside interests. That's what this government thinks is the right direction. For example, why sign on to the Harper government's Buy America deal when it could tie the hands of the provincial government and municipalities to use local tax dollars to create local jobs?

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's interesting to hear the way that the House receives this little salvo because, really, our tax dollars should be used to put our people back to

work, yet the Premier of this province would rather be best buddies with the Prime Minister of this country and sell all our jobs across the border.

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For example, public infrastructure projects that are being constructed in local communities, whether it's hospital construction, school construction, roads, bridges, transit systems, water and sewer, all of those things—these are the kinds of things being funded by our own tax dollars that could be putting Ontario workers back to work. But we will only get Ontarians back to work in these kinds of projects if we are allowed to put in place a policy that actually favours our own workers and our own companies. Unfortunately, the government thinks that it's not necessary to do that. They're not putting anything place. In fact, what they're doing is signing on to a deal that does the exact opposite, that tells municipalities and our province that we are not allowed to, that we will no longer be able to put in place local procurement policies for infrastructure and stimulus funding projects. It's wrong-headed.

If we had full employment, if we had nobody unemployed in this province, then perhaps, but that's not the reality, and we know it's not. There are lots and lots of people—hundreds of thousands of people—still out of work, not able to get a job, yet this government is prepared to get rid of one of the few tools that we have at the municipal and provincial levels to get people back to work. It's absolutely unacceptable.

Here's another one: Why forbid the OPG from being a leader in renewable energy? Here we have Ontario Power Generation, a publicly owned company, not allowed to bid, not allowed to be in the game of green energy in this province. The unfortunate reality is that a leader in renewable energy could be OPG—could be—but not in Ontario, not with Dalton McGuinty at the helm. Why? Because he would rather invite foreign giants like Samsung and the American giant NextEra Energy into the province instead of creating that green energy opportunity with our own public companies.

Why sell off Ontario's crown jewels when it's only existing provincial policy that prevents these crown corporations from using their expertise and resources to create jobs here in Ontario? Let's do the math. Crown corporations currently contribute as much as \$4 billion to the provincial treasury—that's \$4 billion for schools, \$4 billion for roads, \$4 billion for hospitals—every single year, year in and year out. If we sell them, they'll pay about \$1 billion in taxes, leaving about \$3 billion of profit for somebody else. In what world does that kind of thing make sense? It seems like a raw deal to me. The government says that they're going to find a way to make that deal work. Well, we're waiting. We're waiting.

We're also waiting to see the government stand up for Ontario jobs. Public money and natural resources should be put to use to create jobs here in Ontario. We have said it before, and we will continue to say it: That needs to happen. Unfortunately, the McGuinty government seems happy to see those jobs shipped away. Ontario needs a

comprehensive program that would ensure that whenever it is economically feasible, provincial and municipal procurement jobs get preference to Ontario- and Canada-made projects—period. It's very simple, very fundamental.

We also need to see that Ontario's resources are processed here in Ontario. We don't want to see our precious resources, particularly in northern Ontario, just pulled up out of the ground and then sent all around the world to be processed. In other words, those good, value-added jobs are being sent all around the world when they should be kept here in Ontario so that we can put Ontario workers to work.

We need to allow smaller and mid-size Ontario companies to achieve the scale they need to export and successfully compete in global markets, creating good-paying jobs for Ontarians. Despite what the government tells us, the harmonized sales tax, corporate tax cuts and tax giveaways to profitable banks simply are not going to create jobs. These kinds of tax policies do not create jobs.

High-wage, good-quality jobs will come, but we need to be smart about it. New Democrats believe in creating a pro-investment tax regime, certainly, a tax regime that directly rewards job creation. How? By making sure that those tax incentives that are going into plant machinery, new employment, information technology, and workplace skills are tied to jobs. That's what we'd like to see.

The government's harmonized sales tax is going to cost the treasury of this province—I say this everywhere I go, and people don't believe it—\$4 billion each and every year—\$4 billion. People say to me, "How can that be? Isn't there a huge deficit that the province is facing?" "Absolutely, there's a huge deficit," I say. Well, then why would the government bring forward a tax policy that blows a hole in the revenue stream to the tune of \$4 billion every single year? It makes no sense whatsoever.

Corporate income tax reductions alone are going to cost the treasury \$2.4 billion annually—\$2.4 billion in corporate income tax reductions. We don't believe that these tax cuts are the best possible use of our money. We don't believe that \$10 billion per year going out the door is the right thing to do. Targeting those funds to create the kind of jobs that we want, good-paying jobs in this province: That's smart policy, not these no-strings-attached, huge corporate tax giveaways that really don't achieve a single thing at all and where there are no jobs guaranteed whatsoever.

In particular, the targeting of funds to jobs is important, but creative and timely use of tax credits for new investments and new hiring in Ontario, as they already do in Quebec—it's not like these ideas are not being used, and used successfully, in other jurisdictions, places like Quebec, Manitoba and other provinces—is a much more effective way of creating jobs. It's working. It's successful in other jurisdictions, but this government isn't interested at all in those kinds of policies.

In our forestry and mining sectors, Ontario must work to create more value-added jobs. A value-added strategy in forestry would mean more jobs making hardwood

flooring and doors, engineered wood products, cabinets, furniture, and less unprocessed lumber simply being shipped out of the province. Whenever possible, the processing of Ontario resources should be done in Ontario and not in outside jurisdictions.

Again, I say very clearly that New Democrats are bringing these issues to the table every single day in this Legislature. Whether it's Gilles Bisson, the member for Timmins—James Bay; France Gélinas, the member for Nickel Belt; or Howard Hampton, the member for Kenora—Rainy River, they are constantly on their feet, ringing the alarm bells for the people of northern Ontario, trying to get the government to pay attention to the fact that communities in the north are shutting down, literally. They're becoming ghost towns, because there are no jobs for their people. The mill closes. What happens? There's no money in the economy. All the stores close. The people move away. There's no opportunity for young people. In some of the towns I've visited in northern Ontario, there are no young people. They joke, to try to make themselves feel better, but they're becoming retirement communities, not necessarily because they want to be retirement communities, but because the young people have no opportunity there and are forced to leave. Entire towns are being decimated while this government snoozes and puts forward a throne speech that doesn't talk about these issues at all. It's an absolute shameful state of affairs.

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It's really unacceptable that the government hasn't brought forward anything in regard to job creation, particularly when we know that people are really suffering. That's exactly what they wanted. They wanted to hear some real hope about jobs, not just some pie-in-the-sky plans like the throne speech laid out for the future, but jobs for today, jobs for the here and now. That's what people wanted to see and they were sorely disappointed.

One of the other things that was missing from the throne speech was any discussion at all about people's retirement income. There's an entire national debate going on about retirement income and pensions. There's been nothing said by this government on the pension issue.

New Democrats have been travelling this province for years now talking to people about pensions. The MPP for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek recently was on tour, not even quite a year ago, talking to people about pensions and income security in retirement. Did the government even say a word about pensions in their throne speech? Absolutely not. It's outrageous, when we know that two out of every three Ontarians do not have a workplace-based pension plan.

It was really clear in the Harper budget that the federal government has no intention whatsoever of addressing the pension issue; no expectation at all was left that there was going to be expansion of the CPP or that there was going to be any kind of attention to the pension issue in this country. Obviously, it then falls on this government to begin to address the crisis in retirement incomes for

the people of Ontario. It's incumbent upon them to take on that issue.

People are very, very worried about whether they're going to be able to make ends meet when they retire. It is a huge public policy issue that this government is simply turning a blind eye to, and that's unacceptable. People work hard all their lives; they should be able to retire in dignity and with some quality of life.

We've already done some work on this, as I was mentioning. The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has done some really good work on this, and as a result of that good work—after extensive discussions and consultations across the province—we laid on the table in mid-January something called the Ontario retirement plan.

We think it's a good plan. It would basically allow every single worker in this province without a workplace-based pension plan to actually have such a plan. But it also recognizes that some people feel that they are already taking care of that themselves. If you believe that you have a better way as an individual to plan for your retirement, you don't necessarily have to participate in the Ontario retirement plan. It's exactly the kind of forward-thinking, practical retirement strategy that people in Ontario have told us, through our consultation process, that they want and that they need, yet this government's throne speech didn't offer Ontarians worried about retirement any plan at all. There was not a word on pensions in the throne speech, not a word.

We did, thankfully, hear a few words from the government about green jobs in Monday's throne speech, but it was a far cry, unfortunately, from a real commitment to the environment and to building the green economy that we need to have here in Ontario, especially given the fact that this government has missed its climate change targets by such a dramatic margin; again, an issue that was raised very recently by our Environmental Commissioner, another independent officer of the Legislature.

We did hear a reiteration of a promise to close coal plants on the same day it was revealed that the government paid OPG over \$400 million in 2009 to keep coal plants open. And despite the fact that Ontarians learned just a few months ago that this province is on track to miss its emissions reduction commitments by a mile, there's no plan in the throne speech to get Ontario back on track in terms of the environment, and neither is there an expansion of energy conservation targets for green energy.

The government does say that it wants to promote the export of clean water technology, which is perhaps a laudable goal. If such a promise had come from a government with an environmental record less tarnished than this one, perhaps it would have received a little more support. But a pledge to develop Ontario as a centre for water expertise really does ring false, particularly coming from a government that has done such a poor job of providing clean water right here at home to Ontario's First Nations.

If the environment minister doesn't have any idea about that, he should probably learn about it, because it's quite a disgusting situation. We have boil-water alerts in communities across this province, and this government puts in a throne speech a highfalutin idea about clean water technology, and makes no commitment to make sure that every person in Ontario has access to clean and safe drinking water. Shame on them.

We're seeing in the throne speech more handouts to profitable multinationals like GE and DuPont, but there are no strings attached to ensure that we can start creating green jobs, and creating them now.

Perhaps worst of all in the throne speech, the government has allowed mining companies to stake 8,000 mining claims covering an area six times the size of the Athabasca oil sands. It's a serious situation. It has allowed construction of a 2,000-metre airstrip and the planning for a 350-kilometre railway without any consultation whatsoever with First Nations communities.

This government likes to talk about its new relationship with First Nations. The only people who think it's a new relationship is the government. First Nations know it's not a new relationship. They knew it when this government refused to make commitments in terms of point-of-sale exemptions on the HST, and now they're seeing it play out again in the Ring of Fire. Shame on you.

If you don't have a proper dialogue and consultation with First Nations, all of Ontario is going to have to regret it, not just you. It's your obligation; it's your responsibility. It needs to happen, and it needs to happen before the airstrips are built. It needs to happen before the railways are put down. It needs to happen before the mining stakes are claimed. That's what has to happen.

It's a serious situation when this government hasn't learned from the mistakes of the past. The government is creating unnecessary conflict between First Nations and mining companies while polluting the environment for decades to come. Shame on them for that.

It's regrettable that the throne speech contained no meaningful alternatives, because better ideas are there. I'm proud that many of those good ideas have come from New Democrats.

Instead of giving corporate handouts for unproven technology, the government should be making environmentalism more affordable for struggling Ontarians. We all deserve a stake in the greener future. That means the government needs to demonstrate a plan to invest in proven job-intensive green sectors. We need to create green jobs by making green choices affordable for everyone today.

We've been clear on where we think we can start: free home audits; low-interest loans and grants for home energy efficiency retrofits—these are pretty basic ideas—grants and loans for apartments and condo conservation and energy efficiency; interest-free loans for solar panels; freeze transit fares so public transit is a viable alternative for all Ontarians. These are viable, workable, pragmatic ideas, and yet they were entirely absent from the throne speech.

1640

I want to say, on the topic of issues Ontarians didn't hear in the throne speech, I believe their omission helps to tell the real story about exactly what this government's priorities are and whose interests it really represents. Some of the issues that affect Ontario's most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens got shamefully short shrift in this throne speech. Issues related to poverty were entirely glossed over, and that's particularly unsettling because this is a government that not long ago at least made overtures about pretending to be concerned about the issues low-income Ontarians face. In fact, a key component of the McGuinty government's 2007 platform was poverty reduction. Specific actions to reduce poverty were part of the 2007 throne speech. Last time I looked, we still have a poverty crisis in this province. Is it because so little has actually been accomplished on poverty reduction that Monday's throne speech contained no focused strategy or tangible commitments to reduce poverty? They're too ashamed of their poor record on poverty to even dare to mention it in the throne speech?

The Toronto Star called this situation with the issue of poverty not even being talked about in the throne speech as being "virtual silence" and "disappointing." Is this silence an admission that the government has abandoned its election promise to implement a poverty reduction strategy? Is that what Ontarians are to take from the absence of any reference whatsoever to the crisis of poverty that still faces many, many people in this province? It appears so.

The government's throne speech said nothing at all about affordable housing, nothing at all about improving people's income security, nothing at all about job security, and nothing at all about child care and access to child care. What this government did instead is to simply pass the buck onto the shoulders of the federal government and onto the backs of community volunteers. Now we're left to hope that this government will make the necessary investments in the upcoming budget to achieve its poverty reduction targets, but it's far from encouraging that no blueprint at all for that was provided on Monday in the throne speech. In fact, it seems that the government is doing its best to talk about Ontario's most disadvantaged citizens as little as possible; they're doing their best to just keep quiet about that issue. It's inexcusable at a time when there are more people in our province looking for help than ever before.

Today, more and more Ontarians are losing their jobs; they're falling into poverty or are, at least at this point, only one paycheque away from falling into poverty. That's a pretty scary situation. And what's happening? People are turning to food banks in record numbers. Food banks are being established in communities that never had food banks before.

People are waiting for affordable housing for years and years; they're on waiting lists for affordable housing for decades. The waiting lists for affordable housing are growing day in and day out, and yet not a word—not a single word—about affordable housing in the throne speech.

People are waiting longer for child care. They're facing higher tuition fees, higher student debt. These are the kinds of things that concern the people of this province.

Schools are having to fundraise hundreds of thousands of dollars every year just to be able to provide the basic essentials for kids to learn in school.

Interjection: Six hundred million dollars altogether.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Six hundred million dollars annually is being fundraised to help shore up a crumbling public school system. What is the government's response to these crises? It's to thank the volunteers for all the support that they're able to provide, to thank volunteers who work on poverty reduction, to thank volunteers who help out to fundraise for schools, and to pretend that somehow full-day learning on its own is magically going to lift kids out of poverty; full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds somehow is the big solution to lifting children out of poverty. It's shameful.

It begs the question, where exactly is the provincial government action on the issues that are of top concern to the people of Ontario? Where is their government when they need them the most? This throne speech gave Ontario families nothing on child care, nothing on affordable housing, nothing on minimum wage, nothing on income security and nothing on increases to child benefits or social assistance. Poverty reduction was simply left off the table in the 2010 throne speech, and it's unacceptable.

The government still has a year and a half left in its mandate, and its mandate clearly included a commitment to reduce poverty in the past, but without a comprehensive set of measures, poverty is simply not going to be reduced in this province. It's irresponsible for the government to abandon its election promise to reduce poverty, especially when there are good ideas already on the table. If we want to both reduce poverty and spur local investment in our economy, we can begin by ensuring fair wages for every Ontarian.

Taken as a whole, Monday's throne speech leaves one with the impression that this government is either so out of touch that it genuinely has no idea whatsoever of what families worry about when they go to bed at night, or perhaps it's simply not interested. Perhaps it's simply not interested because those needs and wants don't accord with the government's needs and wants.

Not once, when I went across this province, did I hear people talking about things like expanding the number of students that pay full tuition fees at university and college. Nobody talked to me about that over the last year or so. Nobody has talked to me about clean water technology in particular, seeing that as the way forward for this province. But somehow these are the things that this government puts forward as the panacea, as the thing that's going to help us find a new path and put people back to work.

What people talked about was the fact that they lost their job and haven't been able to find another job, or they lost their job and now they're working two or three

jobs because there aren't any good-paying jobs left in their community. Those are the things they talk to me about.

They talk to me about the concern that they're not going to be able to see their children go to university because they can't afford it, because the tuition fees in this province are the highest in Canada, almost the highest in North America. We rank 10th out of 10 on post-secondary funding per capita—10th out of 10 of all the provinces. That's nothing to be proud of at all. That's what people talk to me about. Those are the things that people are worried about. They're worried about whether they can put their kids through university or college.

Do you know what else they're worried about? They're worried about what happens if they actually do manage to get to university, because once that degree has been achieved by that student, they're likely going to leave their education with a debt that's the size of a mortgage, a debt that they're going to have to carry on their backs for a decade to get rid of, because post-secondary education is not being supported the way it should be supported in this province. The weight of it is being carried by young people. That's what people talk to me about when I go across the province.

They talk to me about the fact that there are all kinds of opportunity in our resource-rich north, but they're watching the opportunity walk away because this government has no plans to make sure that those resources that we extract from the ground in northern Ontario are actually used to put people to work with value-added jobs in the communities where those mines exist.

Go to Thunder Bay. Talk to the folks in Thunder Bay about what's happening to the forestry sector. Go to Marathon and talk to the folks there—Terrace Bay, Longlac. These are the kinds of communities I was talking about earlier. There are no jobs left in these communities.

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Thunder Bay has a huge problem with food bank reliance. They can't keep up with the demand. The poverty is unbelievable. The fear in the eyes of the people in these communities is unbelievable. I would ask the Premier to go and visit and talk to these folks and give them some hope. Talk to them about what can be done to reposition Ontario's forestry industry, because it can be done; it's being done in other jurisdictions. We have a hydro rate that makes our forestry industry completely uncompetitive. That's a problem. It's a problem that many of the people in northern Ontario, particularly northwestern Ontario, would have liked this government to have addressed in their throne speech, but it wasn't there. It was not there.

This is the first time I've had an opportunity to respond to the throne speech as the leader of the NDP, and I have to say I'm of two minds about it. On the one hand, in preparation for the remarks today, I spent a lot of time thinking about the extent to which I've had the opportunity over the past year to meet with folks and talk to them about their concerns and issues. I thought that, at

the very least, I would be able to bring some of those things to the table in my response today. I feel positive about that, at least insofar as it brings voice to all of the serious, serious issues that people are concerned about in this province. So on the one hand I'm very pleased and proud to do that.

But unfortunately, on the other hand, I find myself responding to a throne speech that is empty—empty of any kind of proactive, immediate hope for the people of Ontario. It's a throne speech that doesn't provide a single ray of hope for communities that have been devastated from one end of the province to the other; not a single ray of hope for families that are continuing to struggle in poverty; not a single ray of hope for people who are without work and who have been struggling without work—in some cases for well over a year—who have now lost their homes, who have had to liquidate their assets and are on social assistance; not a single ray of hope for those folks in that throne speech that came on Monday.

I still can't understand, I still can't fathom, how it is that a government can put forward a vision for the future that doesn't even provide hope for the future for the people that it purports to represent and to be responsible for governing. How is that responsible government, I ask myself. How could a government possibly bring forward a throne speech that does not address any of the top-of-mind concerns that the people of this province have? Jobs, economy, health care, education: These are the things that are on people's minds. Yet I find myself, in my first opportunity to respond to a throne speech, having to respond to something that—really, the word “disappointment” doesn't cover off the feeling that I have when I look at this government's blueprint, their Open Ontario five-year plan.

I guess they forgot that a big part of the plan is supposed to include the people of the province. A big part of the plan is supposed to actually make life better for folks. A big part of the plan should be about getting Ontarians back to work—right?—because when the people of Ontario get back to work, when they're feeling strong and they're feeling hopeful about the future, then Ontario will be a strong province again.

But that's not what we saw in the throne speech. We saw a lot of lofty ideas, a lot of insinuations about crown corporations, about our health care system—no transparency, no details, nothing specific. But what we didn't see is the government actually respond to the concerns that the people of this province have. So I've had the opportunity to do that over the last couple of minutes and the last, almost, hour.

I think the government needs to be put on notice. They can't just continue to hide under the covers and pretend it's all going to go away. The unemployed single mom who can't get back to work, not only because there's no job for her but also because there's now no child care for her: That's the person this government should have been thinking of when they put the throne speech together. The First Nations communities that don't have clean

drinking water: That should have been top of mind for the government when they put the throne speech together. The hundreds of thousands of people who still are not able to find a job in Ontario, the communities that are closing down: Those are the kinds of things that should have been top of mind for the government in preparing the throne speech. The fact that we've woefully missed our targets on greenhouse gas emission reductions in this province: That's something that should have been top of mind for the government.

Unfortunately, the government has its mind somewhere else completely, not on the very serious issues that face the people of Ontario. They should have been thinking about all those communities that are concerned now about access to quality health care. They should have been thinking about Port Colborne and Fort Erie, about the impact on a community when their emergency ward closes. We've seen the tragic impact of what happens when people have to travel far too far distances to be able to get the emergency care that they need. We'll be hearing from the coroner in regard to a particular tragedy that occurred in the Niagara region. But those are the things that should have been top of mind for this government.

The fact that surgeries are being cancelled, the fact that in my community, 1,200 fewer surgeries are going to be done next year than were done in this year: Why? A simple reason: The hospital can't afford it. The hospital can't afford to do surgeries, so they're going to scale back by 1,200 surgeries. That's just my community. Go to Ottawa: 300,000 hours of front-line, hands-on nursing care cut from the hospitals there. Those are the things that are top of mind for the people of this province, and those are the things that should have been top of mind for this government as they prepared a throne speech.

All I can say is, we have another process to look forward to, and that's the government's tabling of its budget. That's going to be coming in a little while. I'm certainly hopeful that when we get to that process, some of the things that I brought to the table today on behalf of New Democrats, some of the things that I've mentioned, that people tell me they are concerned about, actually get listened to across the way, and the government actually takes heed, takes some advice and starts to address those issues in their budget. People need hope in this province. Ontarians want hope that their health care system is going to be improved, not reduced—and unfortunately, that's what we're seeing. They want hope that there are going to be jobs for them and their children. They want hope that some of the serious issues around education in this province are dealt with. They want to see jobs created with our own tax dollars in this province. They want to see our resources putting people back to work in our communities, instead of shipping raw logs and minerals across borders. Resources that should be giving jobs to the people of Ontario are instead being processed, being manufactured elsewhere.

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These are the kinds of things that I'm hopeful the government will deign to address in their budget, be-

cause, Lord knows, it wasn't in the throne speech, and shame on them for that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. McNeely assumes ballot item number 7, Mr. Arthurs assumes ballot item number 28, Mr. Ruprecht assumes ballot item number 8 and Mr. Oraziotti assumes ballot item number 20.

Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on the throne speech. I will be dividing my time with the member from Ottawa—Orléans. I'll probably be speaking for about half my time, and the member from Ottawa—Orléans will be speaking for the other half.

It is a great pleasure for me to speak on the throne speech and the Open Ontario plan, a plan which really puts forward a vision for the future economy of our province, a vision for what 21st-century Ontario should look like.

I think we have amply debated in this Legislature the economic disorder we went through globally last year, in 2009. It was a tough year; it was a very tough year. Both here in Ontario, at home—almost 300,000 people lost their jobs in our great province—and across Canada and the world, globally, this was a very significant recession.

The question becomes, as we are starting to recover from this recession, what government should be doing, and that's what this throne speech is addressing. What it's doing is putting forward a road map to build an economy in Ontario for the 21st century.

We're not putting our heads in the sand, because that's not the approach we should be taking. What we should be doing is planning for the future, and that is why the Open Ontario plan puts forward a five-year plan to build a stronger economy and creates a plan to create jobs in Ontario. That's what the people of Ontario want. What this government will be delivering through this throne speech, for the people of Ontario, is: How can we have those jobs? What do we need to do, and in what sectors, to be able to create those new jobs? We also know, because of the reorganization of the global economic order, that we have to look at new ways. We have to look at areas where Ontario has capacity to create those jobs.

We also need to make sure that we compete globally. Ontario is in a position to compete globally for investment so that we can create jobs right here in Ontario. Our competition is not nationally just in Canada, with Alberta or Quebec or British Columbia. We do not do business that is limited to North America only. We need to make sure that we are able to compete globally around the world so that we can help Ontarians right here.

We've already started taking those steps. We brought forward a very comprehensive tax reform package. We know the opposition doesn't like it and they're trying to play politics with it, but we have experts from all sides who have looked at the tax reform package and said,

"This will make Ontario competitive." We are making sure that we have a sales tax system in Ontario which benefits Ontarians and which makes our businesses more competitive. We are reducing taxes for our families and we're reducing taxes for our businesses, especially small businesses. I have a lot of small businesses in my riding of Ottawa Centre, and the kind of tax cuts we're bringing—the way we're completely eliminating the capital tax, the way we're eliminating the small business surtax—are going to help small businesses like the ones that exist in Ottawa Centre. That's the kind of approach we need to take to ensure that our businesses are competitive.

But we did not stop there. We also brought in a revolutionary Green Energy Act, which is already starting to create new green jobs in Ontario. It has made Ontario a leader in North America. We have governments at the federal and state levels in the United States that are looking at our Green Energy Act, which is made in Ontario, and saying, "Hey, if Ontario can do it, why can't we do the same?"

We look at examples like the Samsung deal. I always remind people that \$7 billion—foreign dollars—are being invested in Ontario. Can you imagine? That's the kind of thing we read about other jurisdictions in the newspapers, and it's happening right here in Ontario. Why? Because Samsung sees an opportunity in Ontario. We've got rules and regulations in place that have made it attractive for Samsung to bring their foreign investment dollars to Ontario, creating jobs right here—permanent and temporary jobs; not every single job is going to be permanent. But \$7 billion is being invested. That's something we should be proud about, and that's the kind of strategy we need as we recover from the recession.

I also want to mention and talk about the stimulus package—the government is investing \$32.5 billion last fiscal year and this fiscal year—which is already starting to do the job. Today, a report by the Conference Board of Canada came out that talked about how 70,000 jobs have been created through the investment the Ontario government has made in our public and community infrastructure. My community in Ottawa has been quite fortunate to see a lot of those jobs being created in my city. Through the 2009 budget, the McGuinty government has invested almost \$257 million in Ottawa just last year, which is significant.

We have invested about \$124 million in things like the knowledge infrastructure in Ottawa. Carleton University, which is in my riding, has received \$26.25 million to build two new buildings. This is a very important investment. It's incredible. Every time I pass Carleton University—my house is not that far from the university—I see these two towers going up. I see people working, creating new space for knowledge to be distributed, where students will be studying and getting quality education at Carleton University. I congratulate Carleton for the great job they do in research and innovation, and teaching.

Other projects through the infrastructure stimulus fund: We're seeing in my riding of Ottawa Centre invest-

ment being made in the Ottawa Chinatown Gateway project, which will celebrate the heritage of Chinese Canadians in my city of Ottawa; money being invested in the Ottawa Public Library; creating urban multi-use pathways around the river so we can promote more use of bicycles and for people to use as pedestrian sidewalks; transitway improvement around the Albert/Slater Corridor—these are the kinds of investments. Not only are we creating jobs, but we're also making long-term investments to ensure that people are living healthy lifestyles and living in a responsible fashion.

I can go on and on in terms of investments that are being made as a result of the stimulus package in my riding. Affordable housing is another very important one: \$6 million for a 55-unit project sponsored by Shepherds of Good Hope in Ottawa Centre, and \$18.3 million invested at Beaver Barracks, being built by Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corp. Actually, just last week I had the opportunity to put on my hard hat and boots and visit the site where the construction is taking place. The quality of work going on is incredible. This is going to be over 200 affordable housing units in Ottawa Centre because we are investing there. They're creating jobs now, and it's going to help a lot of good people in Ottawa Centre. I'm very proud of that project. It was just heartening to see the great work that is going on. Green building as well—fantastic work that is going on. I can essentially go on and on.

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I've got very little time left. Let me focus on two things which really made it important for me how—the right approach the government is taking in this throne speech. One is the focus on post-secondary education. I don't think any member in this House can deny how important post-secondary education is in today's economy. We need to make sure that people have an opportunity to get a good education because that is how we're going to grow our economy. The laudable target of reaching a 70% graduation rate is something we should really move forward on and achieve. Creating 20,000 new spaces this year is a remarkable step, and I encourage and laud the government for doing so. I know the four post-secondary institutions in Ottawa—Carleton University, the University of Ottawa, La Cité collégiale, which is in my friend's from Ottawa—Orléans riding, and Algonquin College—are going to benefit.

The second one I want to quickly mention is the Water Opportunities Act to make sure that we not only conserve water, but also promote water cleaning technologies and be able to export them. That is going to create jobs right here in Ontario.

Ottawa has an incredible clean tech sector, with companies that are focused on clean air, clean energy, clean water, bioproducts, green buildings and waste management. They are going to significantly benefit. These companies create jobs right in our community in Ottawa, and I'm very excited to work with them as we develop this Water Opportunities Act to ensure that we are preparing an economy for the 21st century.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity, and I pass the floor to my colleague from Ottawa—Orléans.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak in response to the throne speech delivered by the Honourable David C. Onley on March 8, 2010.

The Open Ontario plan will create an Ontario even more open to new ideas, new investment and new people to create the new jobs that are coming.

The package of tax reforms, which started January 1 with provincial personal income tax cuts, to be followed by the harmonization of the sales taxes, will save businesses \$4.5 billion per year and will give our businesses a level playing field with other provinces and other countries when we export our products and our services. Corporate tax cuts will follow, and they will make Ontario one of the best places to grow existing businesses and a place to locate new businesses.

Jack Mintz, the well-known Conservative economist, evaluated the tax reforms brought in by the 2009 budget and said that the tax package will, in the next 10 years, attract an additional \$47 billion in investment, increase the earning power of Ontarians by up to 9% and create an additional 591,000 jobs in the province.

Another Conservative economist that I know, Bob Plamondon, said that the bill that was brought in by our government was brilliant, "but we're going to have a hard time selling it." I think there's an acknowledgement that we're doing the right thing. We know we are, and this is the right way for Ontario to go.

There are tax increases and tax decreases under the new tax reform system, and most Ontarians, including seniors and low-income families, will not experience a significant change in their taxes. Some will pay a little bit more, and some will pay a little bit less overall.

Job creation is and has been the focus of this government's actions, and the Open Ontario plan will invest \$32 billion in infrastructure to continue the job creation of past infrastructure investments.

The Green Energy and Green Economy Act, with 50,000 new jobs in the first three years, will continue to build a stronger Ontario. The first of the feed-in tariff projects are now being approved. I have something that was announced today; the Canadian Solar Industries Association has a press release. They "welcomed the Ontario Power Authority's announcement of green-lighted feed-in-tariff projects, noting it was a great day for solar energy in Ontario.

"More than 500 new green energy projects are listed and most of them solar power installations," said Ron Mantay, general manager, solar, Schüco Canada Inc. and a member of the CanSIA board of directors, representing the association at the announcement. 'The wide variety of rooftops that will be covered by solar panels will go a long way to reducing Ontario's carbon footprint by offering stable pricing to renewable energy producers.

We tip our hats to the Ontario government for their championing our children's futures.'

"Solar in Ontario is becoming a reality thanks to the Green Energy Act and the landmark-setting FIT program," said Elizabeth McDonald, CanSIA president. 'The fact retail stores, schools, hospitals and even a church see the richness solar offers the future is evidence of the power of the sun and everyone's growing understanding of how it can be harnessed.'"

That in itself is a significant stage that we've got to with the feed-in tariffs.

The official opposition railed against the state of the economy in Ontario, but they should know that 80% of our exports went to the USA before this downturn and that that customer, the USA, is hurting now. We have reacted to that change by creating the conditions for Ontario to weather the storm, and with the Open Ontario plan we will come out stronger when world economies recover. That is why the Samsung projects—investing over \$7 billion in Ontario, jump-starting the manufacture of solar panels and wind turbines in Ontario, and creating 16,000 jobs—are so important.

I was pleased last summer to visit two eastern Ontario companies that saw opportunities in the new economy and were expanding their businesses to give them increased capacity to produce complex machine products. Another was responding to the need for bigger and better water-powered turbines and related equipment. This was a result of the eastern Ontario development fund, which has been very successful in holding and increasing jobs in Ontario.

I was fortunate in 2008—2007, I believe—to bring a distance learning centre to Orléans. Despite a lack of municipal support, I see that facility transitioning into the Ontario Online Institute. This will bring the best professors and the top programs at Ontario universities into the homes of those who wish to pursue this new option for higher learning. Distance learning works. We have a good basis for it, which started in northern Ontario, and we're ready to move in the new direction. Millions of families around the globe want what Ontarians have: a quality post-secondary education. Through our colleges and universities and our new Ontario Online Institute, we can provide that.

I was recently quoted in an Ottawa newspaper as saying that I "wished climate change had been given more of a priority" in the throne speech. But the lack of action I spoke of was at the federal level, not the provincial level. The fact is that we in Ontario have been working hard to green our province and our economy; in the throne speech, we called on the federal government to show the same kind of leadership on climate change.

In Ontario we are closing down our coal-fired plants, we are building clean technologies and we are supporting them. Canada must show the same leadership that Ontario, Quebec, BC and other provinces have shown. The federal government must change its position where it is fighting against the rest of the world in preserving dirty coal and supporting big, dirty oil. Ontario and other

provinces have shown the way to reduce our greenhouse gases. Canada has placed all its efforts in capture, transport and storage of CO₂. This technology is expensive and far from being a solution.

Canada must work with the provinces to put in place a cap-and-trade system. We passed our cap-and-trade legislation last fall, and we are working with the Western Climate Initiative to establish levels of pollutants for each industry. Greenhouse gas production in Canada has increase 27% since 1990, and Canada, under the current government, has shown leadership only to those who want to continue to pollute.

Ontario has taken a different direction, one of greening the environment. We are on schedule for closing coal-fired electricity plants. Through the Green Energy Act, we are creating green energy in solar, wind, water, biomass and more. Just look at the announcements today from Ottawa.

The Ontario home energy savings program has had great success, and includes the upgrade of low-rise properties—typically under three floors—under part 2 and part 9 of the National Building Code of Canada. This program has accomplished much, with more than 107,000 home retrofits, each averaging \$1,400, in 2009-10 alone. Ontario's share of \$150 million leverages a total investment of \$900 million and reduces each home's carbon emissions by about three tonnes, for a total annual reduction of about 321,000 tonnes of carbon for 2009-10 alone. This is an important conservation program that created 8,500 jobs in this period of recession and economic downturn.

This program has the potential of lowering greenhouse gas production on an annual basis, if all these types of homes are retrofit, by six million to nine million tonnes annually, which compares favourably with the closing of coal-fired plants.

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So we have a plan to green the economy and at the same time create jobs. The throne speech moves these vital and successful programs forward. It builds on and continues many other initiatives the government has put in place for Ontario: better success rates in school, higher graduation rates for high school, full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds and the Open Ontario plan that has set a target to raise the proportion of Ontarians with post-secondary education from 62% to 70%.

Our bold new plan for health care will improve patient care in hospitals while holding health care providers accountable for the dollars they get. Since forming government, we have given 900,000 more Ontarians access to a family doctor; 900,000 more Ontarians have a family doctor. We have the lowest wait times in the country. Now is the time to build on that success, while controlling the increasing costs of care. The plan outlined in the throne speech will do that by focusing on patients first when determining where money will go.

This is one more example of our government putting Ontarians first. That is what we have been elected to do; it's what I've been elected to do. It's why I'm proud to

support this speech from the throne and its visionary agenda. Together, we will all make Ontario better for Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased that both members from Ottawa read their speeches, which were prepared for them, quite well. That's good.

I want to put on the record an article that is worth reading. It's from the March 9 post-mortem on the budget—or the throne speech, which is roughly the same thing. It says: "Canada's Greece? Ontario Better Get Its Act Together." Here's the important thing for the record: Former central bank governor David Dodge suggested that Ontario has a "structural" deficit that will persist and grow even when the economy fully rebounds.

"Mr. Dodge told a business audience in Toronto last week that Ontario's spending is outpacing revenue growth so quickly that the result will be a structural deficit equivalent to 3.5% of the province's economic output by 2020...."

I put a lot of faith in what he says. A lot of what they're saying here today is simply incorrect. The 20,000 students? There is no money for it. All these plans and promises are just like they did in 2003 and 2007. You can't trust a word they're saying.

It goes on to say: "Provincial deficits like Ontario's are likely to be 'very much more difficult' to eradicate than the federal budget gap, Mr. Dodge opined in a recent talk in Toronto, because provinces are the front line for soaring health care spending," which is out of control. It says the only solution here is higher taxes and user fees.

There it is. There is the former governor of the Bank of Canada. There's an article, if you call my constituency office, we'd be pleased to—it's not a politically pinned piece. This is a real, open, honest commentary on the ineffective plan of Premier McGuinty and his finance minister, Dwight Duncan.

Now, we'll see how they're going to fund these new hospitals, the 20,000 students, the water treatment, the Open Ontario. There is no chance in—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened with profound interest to my colleagues from Ottawa Centre and Ottawa–Orléans when they were talking about this document, this vision of the future. I was waiting for the word "ethereal" to come out of their lips because it appeared to me that they were drawing things out of the thin air that are contained within that document and within the learned words of our Lieutenant Governor.

They talked about how the government is doing this wonderful job, but they never once acknowledged the bad job that the government is doing in terms of job creation. They never once acknowledged why our education systems are 10th out of 10 across this country. They never once acknowledged what really the people of Ontario are asking them to talk about.

Within the body of the document there was much said about the Ring of Fire. With the greatest of respect, it is nothing more than the dream of a prospector at this point. There have been no negotiations whatsoever that have taken place with Canada's First Nations—absolutely none. We read in the paper yesterday and confirmed again in the paper today that there is an attempt by some of the First Nations to blockade it.

What kind of development plan is that? What kind of hope for jobs is that? If that's the best you can come up with, if that's the best you can talk about, I'm not sure that this is what it's really all about. They talk about our water technology. God bless our water technology; it's probably a good one. But how can we export our water technology around the world when we can't even provide clean and safe drinking water to many of our northern and First Nations communities? They talk about calling in the federal government, that old bugaboo: "When I can't do it, blame the federal government. Say that they've done something wrong."

This is all, with the greatest of respect, a lot of hog-wash.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Durham—you have spoken.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, no, no; take your seat. The member for Durham, take your seat. We're in questions and comments.

The member for London-Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to my colleague speaking about the important issues from the throne speech. They outline our government's vision for the next five years. They talk about the important things: how we can increase the capacity of our universities and allow our students across the province to attend college and university, opening up our universities for international students to come and learn in this province, which I believe strongly has the best education system in the whole world. Many people want to come and study in our universities. I think it's very important to allow those students to come to learn about our inventions, our research, our innovations.

They also talk about green energy, which is a very important step toward a brighter future, a green future. I think many people in this province are looking forward to seeing our energy come from green energy, to protect our health, to protect our environment.

They also spoke—I know the member from Beaches-East York commented in his speech that it's very important to explore our water technology, because our water technology is very important. We have so many different companies across the province, not just in Ottawa. In my riding of London-Fanshawe we have great companies, like Trojan Technologies. Many companies from around the globe come—Purifics had a contract not long ago with NASA to purify the air and the water. Why don't we explore this avenue? Because I think in the future all the fight and all the technology is going to

focus on green energy and water technology because, as water becomes less and less, it's our obligation and duty to purify that water, treat the sewer water and send it back to the river or the ocean in the way we received it. We are experts in this field. We're going to explore it. I think it's a good way for a brighter future for the province of Ontario and for our people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: In the few moments that I have, I think one of the most important messages about this throne speech is what it wasn't, and that is, it doesn't give people across the province—people in my riding of York-Simcoe, for instance—something to hang on to. They want to know about jobs. They want something very specific. If they're not directly involved in water technology or perhaps boil-water orders, this is not something that they can relate to. They were looking for something that would tell them what opportunities would lie ahead for them. They wanted to know about the cuts that they have witnessed in the delivery of service by the CCACs. They want to know about the HST. Many have written to me about how difficult or impossible it will be for them to absorb 8% more for such things as hydro and home heat and putting gas in their cars.

We understand that a throne speech is designed to lay out a plan of the government's. But in this case, there was not a vision with a plan. There was a great deal of disappointment in the fact that it didn't speak to those issues they feel the most strongly about.

I think that one of the other contradictions is, of course, the way in which there are a number of issues that the government continues to bring up in throne speeches and never quite gets around to.

1730

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Ottawa Centre, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the members from Durham, Beaches-East York, London-Fanshawe and York-Simcoe for their comments on the comments made by the member from Ottawa-Orléans and myself.

What I would like to say is, I think it was a bit of a theme I heard from the three members who spoke from the opposition that somehow there's a lack of a plan, as they argue, or there's no talk about jobs. The whole plan outline is about creating jobs. Jobs just cannot be created out of thin air. You need to create opportunities in the province to ensure that businesses are able to succeed and create jobs. That's what we are trying to do. That is why we undertook a very comprehensive tax reform, which the opposition disagreed with, but it is about creating jobs. It's making sure that our businesses are competitive, that they can compete here in Canada and they can compete globally. When business is successful, they will create jobs. The government's job to is to make sure that there is a business-friendly environment in this province.

We're doing the same thing with looking at clean water technologies: There's another great opportunity for

Ontario to succeed globally. If we can have those companies be able to be successful and sell those technologies globally, like the company Ecoview in Ottawa, they will create jobs. That's what we're trying to do.

The member from York-Simcoe said, "Where are the opportunities?" This is how we're going to create those opportunities, and that is what we are trying to do through this plan. I think we all have to recognize the old days are gone. The way we did business in the past and the kind of businesses that operated in Ontario are no longer sustainable. We need to find new markets, new horizons, new opportunities, and that is what we are trying to do through this throne speech, so that Ontarians can be successful, they can get good jobs and make this province even more prosperous than what we have inherited. That's what we're trying to do through this Open Ontario plan. I encourage all members to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'd like to begin my remarks with what I consider Mr. McGuinty's last throne speech, and I make reference to a headline on the website of my local radio station. It's titled "Liberal's Throne Speech—Out of Gas and Out of Touch." That's CD98.9, Simcoe radio.

Instead of using his last speech from the throne to change course and finally provide a long-term plan, new leadership, spending restraint and job creation, Mr. McGuinty has very clearly chosen the "same old same old" throne speech that will ensure Ontario does remain saddled with one of the worst records with respect to job creation, taxes and debt in all of Canada.

Going back to that headline, "Out of Touch," well, I can tell you there's no mention of any of the issues that people in my riding phone me, contact me, email me or stop me on the street about.

There's certainly no mention of the decision to waste hundreds of millions of dollars in Liberal-friendly consultants with respect to the eHealth scandal.

Despite the fact that it's probably been the hottest political topic in the province over the last year, there's no mention of the decision to impose a massive \$3-billion HST tax grab on seniors, families and small businesses.

"Out of Touch": This coming Sunday, steelworkers will be holding a rally down at US Steel in Nanticoke. Well over 1,000 steelworkers at US Steel have been laid off. They've been locked out since last March. They've been out in the cold for almost a year now. Families have been split apart; homes have been lost. As many in the House will know, a foreign-owned company purchased the former Stelco. The minister responsible has failed to meet with the federal government and has not met with any of our local mayors. Obviously, I can find no policy coming from this government with respect to primary industry or heavy industry. Despite all of this, Monday's throne speech really had nothing for them, no mention at all of the steel industry or any of the other related industries. I'm very concerned that what we heard on Monday is a very clear indication that this government is bereft of any new ideas.

Agriculture: There was a mention of agriculture; no mention of risk management. There was not even a mention of supply management.

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Was this by design? I hear some carping across the way. Is this sending a signal to rural Ontario? I really wonder if those in charge of this government—it may not be those across the way—could find rural Ontario on a map.

I wonder as well if anybody here could find Caledonia on the map. We do know that the Attorney General did make it down to meet with Haldimand's municipal representatives. However, he would not meet with them in Haldimand county. These were the municipal councillors and the mayor. They had to drive over to Brantford for a meeting. I guess if you're in a Liberal riding, you get a meeting with a cabinet minister.

I suppose it's not surprising the throne speech fails to make even passing mention of the unacceptable situation playing out down in Caledonia and Haldimand county. I personally find that quite depressing. However, this government was certainly quick out of the gate last week in repeating the absolute and complete falsehood that Justice Sidney Linden's Ipperwash report, the 100 recommendations, included a recommendation for the handover of the provincial park. You'd better check that one out, most specifically the Minister of Natural Resources. There is no such recommendation.

This government can throw their unquestioning support behind a complete falsehood for Ipperwash, but it can't mention any plan for Caledonia. Again, the assumption is, they have no plan. It goes beyond being out of touch or beyond being out of gas.

The fact is we have a government that has spent us into a \$24-billion deficit this year alone and fails to mention any sort of plan to find savings, to turn things around. The fuel gauge is on empty on this one.

This government is on a course to double Ontario's debt by 2012-13, to put Ontario in the hole to the tune of something like \$245 billion in debt. However, the throne speech only devoted 24 words, something like three lines, to talk about either the debt or the accumulative deficits that create that debt.

Instead of savings plans, we get deficit spending plans, plans to spend money we don't have. I've said this before: This province does not have a revenue problem; this province has a spending problem. Deficits have risen to levels that are going to be very difficult to turn around, because of this cumulative impact on the debt. We must stop this deficit growth to ensure sustainable revenue generation in the future.

By fiscal year 2011-12, the Ministry of Finance projects the province will be raising \$100 billion in revenue. Revenue by that time will have increased 46% since the year Dalton McGuinty took office, yet expenses will still exceed revenue by nearly \$20 billion.

The same goes for this present fiscal year. October 22, 2009—we know of that earth-shattering announcement of a \$24.7-billion deficit, a deficit that was larger than all

of the deficits combined from every other province and territory across the dominion of Canada.

Every hour of every day, the government spends \$2.8 million more than it receives in revenue. At this current rate of spending, by 2012-13, as I said, Ontario's debt will double to \$245 billion. However, instead of finding savings, we see a government finding ways to deficit-spend.

1740

Since coming to office, Mr. McGuinty has increased government spending by over 65%. You name it; everything gets funded. Over the same time period, Ontario's economy only grew by 5.7%. So, since that same time, 2003, Ontario's debt has grown by \$65 billion, government spending has increased 65%, and yet over that same time period Ontario's economy has grown by less than 6% on a per household basis. So far, Mr. McGuinty has increased the province's debt by \$13,500 for every family in the province of Ontario.

Stimulus funding, shovel-ready: Despite spending more than \$32 billion on stimulus and promising to create more than a million new jobs, the McGuinty government has presided over a net job loss of 141,600 people—not just jobs, these are people—in the year 2009.

Since coming to office, we've seen the loss of 279,000 manufacturing jobs and what I consider a staggering expansion of the public sector—a public sector expansion well over eight times any growth in the private sector. Obviously Ontario, once the economic engine of Confederation, is now a have-not province, and we see an unemployment rate at present of 9.2%. Again, that's 600,000 people who are not working, and 9.2% is well above the provincial average.

Clearly, the evidence is there. We've got a government that's addicted to spending. There is clear evidence of the negative impact that this kind of spending has on our provincial economy, and we see nothing in this throne speech to put us back on track.

At the beginning of this year I listened to nearly 140 groups who presented to Ontario's Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and deputants made something like 1,000 recommendations to this government. Again, I see no evidence of their input in this throne speech. Perhaps some of this will show up in the budget down the road; I'm really not holding my breath on that one. I'm very concerned that this government, from what we've seen in the throne speech, just really doesn't get what's been going on in the last year or two in this province.

No mention of targeted tax relief instead of what has been rolled out: the proven-to-fail corporate welfare scheme; the bad economics of picking winners and losers. Where was the initiative to reduce the tremendous cost of excessive regulation and unnecessary red tape in this speech from the throne?

It's well known that red tape and over-the-top regulation kills jobs. It's very simple. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that complying

with regulation costs the Ontario economy \$11 billion a year. In the end, excessive regulation costs us time, money and jobs and forces businesses to pay up, shut down or leave the province. The Toronto Star has an estimate that the province of Ontario is currently awash in over 500,000 regulations. Again, this was not addressed in the throne speech.

There are some ideas that have come forward, the kind of ideas that I feel farmers and small business would find heartening. One recommendation coming from the opposition: The McGuinty government should make a member of cabinet specifically accountable for the reduction of red tape along with the—we called for the reinstatement of the provincial Red Tape Commission. This commission, once established, would have a number of responsibilities, including accountability:

(1) help inform business of regulation and assist in achieving compliance;

(2) consider principles and outcome-based approaches before proceeding to impose prescriptive, rules-based regulation;

(3) Undertake an assessment of any proposed legislation or regulation and determine its economic or administrative impact. The assessment should include a review of the additional burden on business as well as the cost on government to implement this kind of legislation or regulation.

Further to the third point, we do have to remember that every time a farmer or a small business person fills out some paperwork, fills out some forms, there's somebody at the other end—a staff person, a bureaucrat in government—who has to read those forms, make a decision and send them on down the line.

(4) Review all existing legislation, regulation and forms, and undertake to remove those which are outdated and, wherever possible, streamline the rest.

(5) Establish hard targets by counting the number of regulations for each ministry, decrease and streamline these figures, and report to cabinet at regular intervals on progress made.

So there are some ideas with respect to red tape.

I want to talk a little bit about one thing that was mentioned in the speech that's going to cost us money under, in my view, the cloak of environmentalism: the announcement of what appears to be an uncoded water strategy, the green water bill from Mr. McGuinty. Given the track record, I suspect once again that this government is trotting out their latest green plan—usually these things are brought out to divert people's attention from the economy, from increases in taxation. Take a look at the costly path that's being plowed with respect to the Green Energy Act: untendered sweetheart deals with foreign companies, price hikes, and on and on and on.

As we have seen in the past, when it comes to some of these McGuinty "feel green" announcements, so often, regrettably, the devil is in the details, and while the goals of the strategy may sound good on the 6 o'clock news, I fear we're only hearing a very small part of the story. Former minister David Caplan very recently admitted

that his private member's bill to revamp the province's water system would cost consumers something like \$600 a year. Again, it raises that spectre: Could Mr. McGuinty's green water bill turn out to be yet another tax grab, again under the guise of environmentalism?

At this time in the history of the province of Ontario, when this government has spent its way to the bottom of the barrel while so many of our residents struggle to maintain their livelihoods in a spiralling economy, I do question the timing of further water rate reductions or tax burdens, or onerous red tape, for that matter. This is not the time.

The throne speech did make mention of a new approach to hospital funding. Why not? How did the LHIN approach work out so far? That's the question down in my riding. Maybe the addition of a funding model which picks winners and losers would further threaten the health of our rural health care facilities. I think of the emergency departments in Niagara that have been shut down for good. That's the work of the LHIN in Niagara, although somebody pulls the strings on those organizations. So I'm afraid that down my way we, somewhat ruefully, just can't wait to find out how this latest made-in-Toronto funding model will work out for our small-town and rural health care providers. Again, from what I've been hearing, we have a system that will choose winners and losers. In rural Ontario, we have a gnawing concern about which end of the stick we're going to be at with respect to this one.

1750

The Ontario Health Coalition is quoted as indicating that expanding pay for performance to small hospitals would lead to further disparities between the level of care available in rural and urban Ontario. That does not go over very well down my way. We'll wait for details, but based on early returns there is reason for concern that this will place our hospitals further down the funding food chain. If that's the case, that's clearly not acceptable, and I do put the government on notice for that one.

Education: All-day kindergarten was mentioned in the throne speech. Here's a headline from one of my local papers this week after the speech from the throne. Here's the title: "Board Expects Funding Shortfall." The story goes on to say, "The Grand Erie District School Board could be looking at a \$500,000 shortfall in funding for the first year of full-day kindergarten.

"And, according to cost estimates released on Monday, the board would be forced to charge parents significantly more than current daycare providers do for before- and after-school care in order to make the program break even.

"The cost estimates prepared by superintendent of business Jamie Gunn confirmed trustees' concerns that the province is hastily putting in place the program without giving school boards enough money to do it."

I'll continue to quote this newspaper article:

"The program leaves us with some concerns, and we're not alone," said Gunn. "(The Ministry of Edu-

cation) is saying, make it work and we'll deal with it later' ...

"Gunn said that based on numbers provided by school principals, projected enrolment in the classes is 382, or an average of 22.5 students per class. Ministry funding for the program to break even is based on having 26 students enrolled per class."

Obviously this is not going to work out, and they're talking about a funding shortfall of something like \$500,000.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk. He sits right next to me, so I can hear every word, even in spite of the occasional heckle.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no. He spoke very well. There are some things, obviously, on which I do not agree with him, because, as I listened to him, I thought I was listening to Mike Harris. I honestly thought that the days had not changed and—

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mr. Michael Prue: There's the "hear, hear"—the days have not changed since what happened with that government all those years ago.

He talked about debts and deficits, and yet I do not understand to this day where the Conservatives stand on deficits during this enormous time of social and economic upheaval. I really have no idea where they stand on this, and I really think they need to come clean in terms of whether or not the expenditures that have been made to the social service sector, public service and some businesses were warranted or not warranted and whether or not our debt-to-GDP ratio is too high, because although I am conscious of the fact that our debts are growing, the debt-to-GDP ratio still remains among the best in the G8.

He talked about the public service expansion. I am very worried about what I heard in the throne speech about cutting public employees and cutting public services to the tune of some 5%. But when I listen to my friend beside me, he is talking about a much more serious public service reduction than that.

I hearken back to the days of Walkerton. I hearken back to the time of meat inspectors and the fact that we really require a decent, good and loyal public service in this province and that we cannot blame the public employees for what is happening in terms of the economy or in terms of the province. We need to laud them for the service that they give each and every day to the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Yesterday, I had the opportunity to be on a multicultural radio program, CIRV-FM, with a journalist on one side and hosted and moderated by the radio host. We took questions from residents of Mississauga South and throughout the GTA about the throne

speech, and they shared some of their concerns as to what they would like this province to be in the coming years.

In those discussions, we took a number of questions. The issues that kept coming up were the issues around our economy: to ensure we have opportunities to strengthen our economy, to ensure that we can build those opportunities to inspire more business investment in Ontario and ultimately to create jobs—secure jobs.

They want us to build on the existence of our agendas to date, at the same time promoting future generations.

The bottom line I heard yesterday is that people have some concerns around the leadership going forward. What they take some comfort in is that this government has shown true leadership with regard to this proposal and this throne speech, which are the building blocks going forward. We have a budget coming out in a few weeks to reinforce and to elaborate more fully on some of those issues that we spoke about in the throne speech.

The bottom line, though: It's a balanced approach. I've heard some criticism from opposition members. On the one hand, it's, "Let's slash and burn, and little care for public service." On the other hand, some are talking more about a tax-and-spend policy. They criticize the tax reform and yet, at the same time, they're suggesting that we increase the PST.

What we need to show to the public, I believe, is hope, and to initiate those opportunities to go forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I wanted to comment specifically on the member from Haldimand-Norfolk. I thought he summarized quite fairly—especially when he referred to the "feel green" initiatives. I liked that phrase. I think some of the members on the government side should pick that up. Everything is kind of wrapped in green fuzz. No one is against the environment. It's just a motherhood kind of attitude.

I think it's important to mention what wasn't mentioned. It's very important. Now, listen up. What wasn't mentioned is anything on pension reform. Maybe we'll hear something in the budget on that. There is nothing in here on the new-build nuclear at Darlington. There is nothing on the deficit reduction plan—24 words; nothing to even apologize on the eHealth or the OLG scandals. Selling crown assets—I'm pleading with the Premier: Don't sell Niagara Falls. Of all things, these are sacred treasures for the province of Ontario, so I beg you, don't sell Niagara Falls.

I think the most important thing here is that there was no mention of Dalton days. I think he has done a bit of polling on this. He must have talked to the teachers or whoever.

But my point is this: There is no one here who wouldn't agree with many of the platitudes of making Ontario the best place in the world. It's just the way they're going about it. It's so ham-fisted. To me, you don't spend our future today. Do you understand? You don't spend—to our pages here: Now we have a deficit of \$24 billion, about \$13,000 per person. This is your

future tuition. They just announced in that throne speech indirectly that tuition is going up. Some 20,000 new students, and tuition is going up. It's a tragedy. I can't wait for the budget. It's the other shoe that's going to drop.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it is. Clearly, as many of the headlines said, it's Alice in Wonderland. That was one of the headlines. The other one was, "A Government with No Plan."

I am so discouraged by this whole throne speech—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Here is my difficulty: Mr. O'Toole is a very good friend of mine—the member for Durham—and I heard him say "saving" and I heard him say "spending." He wants to spend on some things and save on some things. It reminds me of that Christmas commercial that Canadian Tire used to have: "Spend like Santa and save like Scrooge." That's the Tory caucus over there.

In the first half of the question period—I listen very carefully to question period—the questions revolve around, "You're spending too much money." Then, in the second half—you hit the 30-minute mark, or maybe a little more sometimes—they get up and ask us to spend more money. That's very difficult, because if you do that, if you're cutting and spending at the same time, that makes the deficit even wider.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: Just balance the budget.

Hon. James J. Bradley: My good friend from Cambridge wants to balance the budget. He says that the best thing to do is not have members ask "spend" questions, because the more we spend, following the member for Cambridge's logic, the higher the deficit. But I keep hearing "spend" questions from my good friends in the Conservative Party. You can't have it both ways. You can't spend like Santa and save like Scrooge. Pick one of the two.

1800

The old Reform Party said, "Save money," and they were all for that. The Reform Party that has morphed into a different party in Ottawa today is spending a lot of money; there's no question about it. But I suspect that's because they're in a minority position. If they were in a majority position, we would see things dictated as they think of them economically in Alberta and imposed on the country. Thank goodness we have, at the present time, a minority government in Ottawa.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Haldimand-Norfolk, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the comments. In fact, the member for Beaches-East York and the member for Mississauga South travelled on that finance committee. We travelled to Niagara Falls, London, North Bay and Kingston. There's still time to transfer forward some of that knowledge and information that we picked up for the budget process.

I just want to reiterate: I'm very concerned with respect to the position that this throne speech has indicated some of our school boards are going to be in with respect to all-day kindergarten. I'm very concerned for small-town hospitals, with this announcement of a new funding model that favours those areas with very high population growth.

My questions remain: What's in store for the steelworkers down at Nanticoke? What's in store for farmers? No mention of risk management; that continues to cast doubt on their future.

The member for Durham made mention of the green water bill, yet again another water bill from Mr. McGuinty—

Interjection: The “feel green” bill.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The “feel green” bill. What's that one going to cost us?

The Minister of Municipal Affairs did use the word “savings.” That's a start. He seemed to spend most of his time talking about spending. My advice to the cabinet minister across: You're in a position to allocate scarce resources; spend wisely, spend appropriately, but most important, think of some savings. Think of saving for a rainy day. Think of saving for the children and grandchildren in the province of Ontario.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

MINING INDUSTRY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister has up to five minutes to reply.

Let the fun begin.

Mr. Randy Hillier: This question—this late show tonight—was called because of the importance of the question and the importance of good, clear, strong answers from the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.

Yesterday I asked a question that arose out of the throne speech. The question was about the Ring of Fire and about development in the Ring of Fire. I asked a simple, straightforward question. To paraphrase: The Premier, in the throne speech, said that the resource sector is so important to Ontario's future. I asked the minister, “Will you commit to developing those resources wherever they are, regardless of Bill 191?” This requires a concrete and substantive answer if we are

actually going to move forward and develop that Ring of Fire, which I do want to see happen.

But we've heard many different, contradictory statements and actions out of the Liberal government. I guess the way I would sum it up is, it's maybe yes and maybe no from the Liberal government. “Maybe we will; maybe we won't.”

To quote the Premier, he said, “The Ring of Fire is the best mining opportunity in Ontario in a century.” That was what the Premier said. The minister, on a CBC Radio show, told northerners, “We need to dial this back. We need to tone it down. Don't get too excited about the Ring of Fire.” Then the minister came back here once again in the House and said that this is a great and wonderful resource and opportunity. We need to reconcile these contradictions. I need some clarity because we can't be all things to all people, and the Liberal government has already had their fair share of promises on this.

You've told your environmentalist friends here in southern Ontario, like Monte Hummel of the World Wildlife Fund, that you are going to protect the north. Dalton McGuinty said even in the throne speech as well that he's going to protect 50% of the boreal forest north of the 51st. He's referring, of course, to Bill 191, the Far North Act. It's an act that restricts, prevents, eliminates any development on 50%—on a quarter-million square kilometres—of northern Ontario. Just for clarity: That means no roads, no airstrips, no hydro grids, and, of course, no mines. Nothing will happen in 50% of the north. I don't know how we're going to get across that 50% protected area to get to the unprotected areas, but that's what I want to hear from the minister. That promise of Bill 191 is a promise of a vast, empty northern Ontario, a vast, empty park that is off limits to all people and all economic activity.

You've also made promises to the developers. You've promised that you're going to develop this Ring of Fire and that you will work with the aboriginal groups in the area, those same aboriginal groups who are now blockading the airstrips, which is the only way in and out of the Ring of Fire. Your promise to develop the ring was promise number two, and your promise to deal with the aboriginal groups is number three.

I'm all for development of this Ring of Fire. I'm all for working with native groups so that they can be treated as real partners and not pawns. The minister asked me if I would join with him, but I can't join with the contradiction. I want to join with him, but I can't join with the contradiction. You've made all these promises, but you haven't consulted anybody except, of course, the World Wildlife Fund. I'd like you to state unequivocally: Will you allow mining in Ontario's north to proceed without any impediments? Will development of the Ring of Fire be hindered, obstructed, impeded, restricted or prevented in any way by Bill 191?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank my colleague for inviting me to the late show. It is a good opportunity, I think, for all of us to speak together about the opportunities that are in northern Ontario, of which there are

many. Certainly, when we get the excitement of a throne speech, as we did earlier this week, and as part of that throne speech you have a substantial economic opportunity such as the Ring of Fire—again, an opportunity that is going to be something like we have not seen in 100 years—it's tremendous, it's invigorating and exciting and refreshing for northerners to see that highlighted as one of the opportunities we have in the future. Again I call on my colleague to join us in supporting that.

There is a tremendous amount of excitement. The member was at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada convention this past couple of days, and he met with a number of people who were also very pleased. Indeed, our government and the Premier have made this a real priority of our government. It's part of our Open Ontario plan, and that says exactly what it means. It really is a plan: a five-year plan for how we can develop an opportunity that's just tremendous in northern Ontario, an opportunity that can deliver up to 3,300 jobs and probably that many as well in terms of construction jobs. The fact is, it's very important that we manage this process in a very positive way.

I want to actually respond to the comments that the member asked of me this morning in terms of my comments on CBC Radio when I said we needed to dial it back. I think what I was trying to convey is that we are going to be moving forward with this plan. We are going to be working with the mining companies, with the aboriginal communities and with all the leadership in terms of this project taking place. But it's also very important for people to understand that there is substantial work to be done. People are asking us whether this is going to happen tomorrow or the next day. There is a process in play that it's very important that we carry forward. We want to be sure that all those who should benefit from this great development do indeed benefit from it.

So when you talk about the situation in terms of a blockade, it's important to point out that the communities that are involved in and excited about this development also want to be sure they accrue the benefits that will come from this project. I can tell you, speaking with the mining companies, which are working closely with the First Nations that are particularly interested in this, they are very optimistic that they can reach a conclusion and reach a resolution to this that will benefit everyone.

There's no question about it: We want to work to implement this plan. We want to be sure that indeed we do this the right way. I think that's important, that we do it the right way. That's why our ministry, the Ministry of

Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, has been engaged on a day-to-day basis, working with the companies, working with the communities and, may I say, also speaking to many of the other municipalities in northern Ontario that see the opportunities that could come as a result of this extraordinary economic opportunity.

Our ministry officials brought the mining company executives up to Marten Falls and Webequie about a month ago—less than a month ago, in fact—and made it very clear how important it is that we build those relationships so that we can come to the kinds of agreements that need to be in place for this to move forward. We're going to be doing that.

So when I was talking about dialling back, it was, "Let's make sure that we manage this in a positive way." There is no doubt that our government is very excited about the mining resources that are in northern Ontario—in fact, all across the province, but specifically in northern Ontario.

We've had some wonderful announcements recently. Just last week, the Young-Davidson mine in Matachewan basically kicked itself open—hundreds of jobs being offered in that—Detour Lake near Timmins, the Lake Shore Gold operation in Timmins as well. There are so many other tremendous opportunities.

As I notice the clock beginning to run out—it's amazing how fast five minutes can go—my colleague needs to understand that our support for the Ring of Fire is based very much on a level of excitement because the Premier and our government see this as being indeed one of the great opportunities of the last century. We want to be able to make sure it moves forward in a positive and constructive way. That means we need to be able to work with the companies and with the aboriginal communities that are impacted directly. We are going to do that by developing a plan that will move this process forward.

As minister, I'm excited. As a member from northern Ontario myself, I see the potential and the value it can have. I know you do as well. Again, I ask you to join people like Chris Hodgson of the Ontario Mining Association and Len Crispino of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Join us and support this great project as we bring great employment opportunities to northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, March 11, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1813.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Thursday 11 March 2010****Jeudi 11 mars 2010**Speaker
Honourable Steve PetersPrésident
L'honorable Steve PetersClerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 11 March 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 11 mars 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 10, 2010, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: The ushers are very good at locking that door as I try to open it. Anyway, I'm a bit out of breath; if one of them could bring me some water, that would be great.

I stand today to talk about the throne speech, and I want to preface my remarks with a few comments about the Lieutenant Governor, David Onley. David Onley and I go back a long way. We went to university together; we were on the student society at Scarborough College at the University of Toronto. We had many debates as politicians, or hopeful politicians, and I admire him very much for his career, his life, his contribution on the airways and the role that he plays as Lieutenant Governor.

There has been much said in the Legislature in the last couple of days about his reading of the throne speech and whether or not there was proper decorum in the House at the time. I think it's very difficult to talk about the motives of individual members and whether proper decorum was given to the Lieutenant Governor. But I do want to say that he read the speech with great sincerity. He did so in a manner befitting his office. Whether or not he agreed with the contents, I have no way of knowing, but I do know that he read what he was given and that we have an obligation as legislators to listen intently to what he said and not to ascribe to him the contents.

Anything I have to say from this point on, I say not for the Lieutenant Governor and not for what he said or how he said it, but for the government who obviously wrote it. I just want it to be very clear that I, for one, recognize the institution for what it is and admire the institution and the man who holds the office.

Having said that, though, I don't like the content of what the Lieutenant Governor had to read. I listened to

the content intently—it was about 44 minutes long—and if ever I have heard a speech that I could describe as ethereal, this was it. It seemed to me to be snatched out of the air, to talk about a whole bunch of airiness and lack of content.

I know my friends opposite think that it contained great insight, but it was like reading a tome of an ancient religion. That's what it was, with all of these thoughts of angels and all of this stuff that's floating around, rather than the real, practical politics and economies of the situation.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: There's an angel right there.

Mr. Michael Prue: I see that my friends opposite see angels everywhere. This is what I took from this: that this is a bunch of true believers. They are caught up in what Eric Hoffer once said was the state of the true believer. No matter what the facts are in front of them, they still believe; no matter what scientific proof they have, it doesn't matter. They believe and they continue to believe, in the face of everything that has changed.

One of my favourite quotes that I use from time to time is by Goethe, and it's a very simple quote: "What is the hardest thing for a man to see? That which is before his very eyes." That's what I think the Liberals have failed to see—what is before their very eyes. They talk of what they want to do in terms of new job development; they talk about the Ring of Fire. I'm excited about the chromite deposits and that one day there may be a mine there that will help the First Nations communities. I've not been to all the First Nations communities around, but I have been to the one that's closest: Marten Falls Ogoki. I've been there twice.

Mr. Norm Miller: Webeque is closer.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay; whatever. Webeque is closest, I'm being told. I have been to Marten Falls Ogoki, which is one of the closer towns to the Ring of Fire. I've seen the destitution and the poverty of that place. I have sat down on several occasions in Toronto with the chief of the First Nations community and talked about what they want. There is no road or railway into the place, and there is nothing for the children to do.

The council got some money from the federal government and they built a hockey rink, hoping that the First Nations kids would have something to do. However, the very first season, before it could even be played on, an ice storm came and smashed it to the ground. There was no money from the federal government; there was no money from the province; there was no money from anyone. To the best of my knowledge, although something

could have happened in the last few months, it's still smashed to the ground.

It is a place without hope. You go into the store in Marten Falls and you see the huge prices that people pay for every common thing. Everything has to be flown in. A bag of milk for \$12, a bag of potatoes for \$15. All of the things that we take for granted, they can't have.

There are no jobs. I talked to the people who were there. There are virtually no jobs, and they rely upon hunting, fishing and other things to feed themselves and their families. What they want most of all is to be able to develop their community into something that is sustainable, that gives their people hope. I hope one day that the Ring of Fire and the chromite deposits do something for them.

0910

But I also know that when this government reaches out and announces the Ring of Fire and the chromite and how this is going to be the new wave of mining in Ontario, I have to take this with a grain of salt, because I've also been to Attawapiskat and I've seen what De Beers has done in proximity. They've done a good job, but that took 10 or 15 years of hard slogging—first of all, to negotiate with the First Nations communities, then to build the infrastructure, then to bring in the workers and then to start the diamond mine. We all know about the diamonds, because there are two of them sitting right there in the mace, but that was not something that happened overnight.

When this government talks about creating jobs in the Ring of Fire, where there is nothing on the ground, where there is no railway, where there are no roads, where there are no negotiations with the First Nations communities, then I have to wonder what kind of dream this is. What kind of thing have they pulled from the raw ether that this is going to get people to work? It is going to take eight or 10 or 12 years to get this off the ground, if it happens at all, and this is one of the four major planks that you have put forward. I'm wondering if that's going to get Ontarians back to work. In the next eight to 10 years, is it even going to give any hope and opportunity to the people of Marten Falls or the other three communities that surround the Ring of Fire?

What else is in here? They start talking about water. I don't know where there's going to be money to be made from water. Are we talking about shipping our water off? Are we talking about technology on how to produce clean water? I wish this government would invest some money in clean water technology. We have 100 communities in this province under boil-water advisories—100 of them—and most of the First Nations have no clean water.

I remember going once with my colleague Gilles Bisson to Attawapiskat. We went there to look at the water purification facility because people were getting sick. We went there and looked at a facility that was, in my view, not being properly managed at all. There was a guy inside the water filtration facility as we walked through it, and my colleague Gilles Bisson looked at the man and said he didn't think they were doing a very good job

cleaning that water for the people of Attawapiskat. The guy took umbrage at that. But Gilles did something, and I still remember it to this day; he challenged the man to take a glass right from what was being pumped out into the town and drink it, and the man refused to do so—he refused to do so—because he knew, as the water purification guy, that the equipment he had and the facilities he had were not good enough to make sure that that town had clean drinking water, and I don't think they've been improved.

I wonder: We're talking about exporting our technology around the world; we can't even export it up to James and Hudson Bays. We can't even export it to our First Nations communities, and we won't give it to them. So I wonder: "That's a great idea; let's export our knowledge." But if we can't even use it at home, who do you think is going to buy it? Who in the world is going to come running to us when we don't even have the wherewithal to use it ourselves?

Then I heard another thing. Another part was the whole talk about health care: "Let's start making the hospitals competitive." This is the new idea: Blairism coming to Ontario. "Let's make the hospitals bid. Let's recognize excellence. Let's have all the hip and knee replacements in this hospital, because they can do it cheaper and faster and better. Let's have the heart surgery done in another one, because they can do it cheaper and faster and better."

But I have to wonder. I live in Toronto. Is it going to cause me any great deal to leave Toronto East General Hospital and go down to Mount Sinai because one does it better than another? Probably not. It's probably no big deal to me and to the 2.5 million people who live in this city. But what about people in smaller-town Ontario? I've listened to the government. Are they going to compete, too? Are they going to have to compete, and little hospitals are going to have no place at all because they can't compete with the big ones? Are people going to have to travel hundreds or thousands of kilometres to get the service from whoever bids for it cheaper? I don't know, and I don't hear the government talking about this at all.

But I do know that if you ask the people of Great Britain about this whole plan that Blair brought in while he was Prime Minister, they will tell you that it was an abject, total and utter failure. This is a province and a government that is trying to emulate the failure in Great Britain. You are trying to do the same plan with almost certainly the same results, and I think this is a desperation plan.

Then I heard the fourth plank, which was to ask the federal government to finally pony up some more money. This is the old bugaboo, "Let's get the federal government to pay for all of this." I have watched—

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: What's wrong with that?

Mr. Michael Prue: My friend across there says, "What's wrong with that?" What's wrong with that is that the federal government doesn't have the responsibilities in the two areas that you want them to pay for.

The first one is child care. The last time I checked the British North America Act, the Constitution of Canada, social services are the responsibility of the provinces.

I welcome the federal government, and I'm sure all socially progressive people welcome the federal government, trying to get into the child care game so that we can have an even playing field across Canada. We know that medicare worked to considerable greatness by leveling it out so that people can go from one end of this country to the other and get similar, if not exactly the same, services. And those provinces that were not able to afford it now have the luxury of equal or nearly equal care to Ontario, British Columbia or Alberta. I recognize that, and I welcome any kind of daycare activity by a federal government that will do that, but it is our responsibility.

This government chose, when the Harper government was elected nationally, to sit down with them and accept \$63.5 million, spread out over four years, as Ontario's contribution. I would not have chosen that. I would not have done that. I would have built some daycare centres and done some other things as opposed to the operating costs, because at the end of the time, the \$63.5 million runs out. There will be no money for daycare. I will hazard a guess that, come the end of March, when we hear the budget from the finance minister standing in this place and talking, there will be no money for daycares.

All nine of the daycares in Windsor have been shut down by the city council because they know there's no money. The city of Toronto has told me that they are closing 2,050 daycare spaces this year; and next year, another 3,000 spaces.

Mr. Dave Levac: They found \$100 million.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: They found \$100 million.

Mr. Michael Prue: They're yelling at me that they found \$100 million, but they've already earmarked it because there is no ongoing funding. There is no ongoing funding from this government because this government has never taken daycare seriously. The only thing that it has ever done is passed on the federal money. Tell me how much of this government's own money it has spent on daycare. I will be shocked if it's anything at all. All they do is pass along the federal money, and when that federal money dries up, they have absolutely no plan except to tell the federal government to give us more money for something that is our responsibility.

The second one they talked about was immigration. Ontario has equal jurisdiction with the federal government. That's why we have a minister responsible for immigration in Ontario. But we spend next to none of our own money on immigration procedures. We take the federal money and we pass it on. We complain that it isn't enough, but we don't do what is necessary.

I think the federal government would take us far more seriously if we invested some of our own time and resources and ran some of our own immigration programs. We know that other provinces that have done that—especially Quebec, but increasingly Manitoba—have had spectacular results in integrating new immigrants and

have been able to choose those immigrants who are best for the economy and bring them here more quickly than if they were coming to Ontario. But Ontario invests none of its own time.

To simply stand back and say to the federal government, "Give us more money for child care, which is our responsibility, but we don't want to spend any of our money on it," or to say, "Give us more money for immigration, which is equally our responsibility, but we don't want to do what other immigrant-receiving provinces are doing, and that is setting up our own system to allow immigrants to become part of the Canadian cultural fabric," I have to say, is not much of a dream, and it's pulled out of thin air as well.

0920

Getting back to health care, I had an opportunity to go to Toronto East General Hospital—or just adjacent to the hospital—the other night. People there were upset because the physiotherapy unit at Toronto East General Hospital is being shut down. When I talked to Rob Devitt, the very capable CEO of that hospital, he told me that he doesn't like to have to shut it down, but what choice does he have? This government has already told him that he's getting 0% or 1% or 2%, but he's budgeting that it's likely to be 0%. He has no choice but to cut out what he thinks are those services that are non-essential or that may be provided elsewhere.

As I listened to the people who were there, all of the people who use the physiotherapy services are poorer people. They're people who do not have their own insurance and do not have the financial wherewithal to go out and have it done privately. They are very upset that their hospital is doing that.

When I listened to the nurses—there are some 100 nurses who are on the chopping line in the latest round—who are being told that they too might be released, I wondered: Where is the government's grand vision? Is this vision only about paying for performance, or is this vision about the people who are going to be affected? I didn't hear anything about the people being affected.

I listened to the whole thing about education and about making international students come to Canada and pay more. I'm wondering how that is going to help our educational institutions and the people who don't have the money to get in there in the first place. We charge the highest tuition fees in Canada. On a per capita basis, we are 10th out of 10 in funding our students. I didn't hear any vision about this. All I heard was: Bring in more foreign students who can pay the full rate, and that's somehow going to help us and make us some kind of centre of excellence.

I think we have an obligation to the 13 million people, especially the people leaving secondary school, to give them the kind of education that will make us great. I am not convinced that bringing in foreign students to pay the full rate is going to allow for that. I am not convinced that that is in the best interests of Ontario, although I do understand it's a bit of a cash cow for this government.

I was most disappointed that there was nothing about poverty. In 2007, this government ran on eliminating

poverty. The 2007 throne speech was filled with how you were going to eliminate poverty, and you've done next to nothing since 2007 except set up some committees. I hope the committees report, but you've done absolutely next to nothing in eliminating poverty.

When I ask the question about diet supplements, I know that cut is coming. I know from the attitude and the reaction that that is coming. When I ask about the disabled, I know there's no money, and I wonder where this government's priorities are. Pick things out of the air and do nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the comments by the honourable member. I also appreciate the comments in regard to decorum. I understand that sometimes our ideologies may differ, but I think people's intentions are good. The bottom line is that we have to recognize that.

Speaking of intentions, the throne speech is visionary. To my colleague's comments, it does take time and it's not meant to be something that takes immediate reaction. But we have to do things concurrently. It is, after all, a five-year plan, and we recognize that we have to establish the foundations now in order to reap the benefits in the future.

Some of those benefits that have to be instituted have to start now; that is, around water treatment technology and about selling Ontario's expertise around the world, just as we're trying to do with renewable energy and other sources of technology; and to incentivize those businesses and companies to come to Ontario to do that R&D and do that manufacturing so we can export some of that expertise around the world.

In regard to hospitals and hospital care, we have been measuring wait times, which had not been done before: wait times in terms of surgeries and wait times now in emergency care. We are measuring it, and now we have noted that in Ontario we're exceeding the national average. It's important to measure it so that we can indeed make the amendments and the improvements necessary when it comes to hospital care. We have more doctors, we have more nurses, and we have to ensure that we maintain that, especially with the influx of more Ontarians coming to the province.

In regard to all-day learning, post-secondary and education generally, we've made those improvements too, and it's important that we invest in education going forward. Some 62% of Ontarians have post-secondary education; we're trying to move the bar up to 70%. These things are required in order for us to be competitive.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York. I enjoyed listening to him. I will echo a few of his sentiments and maybe amplify some of them and disagree with some of them.

The member didn't like the content of the throne speech. I have a little bit of a different take on that: There was no content in the throne speech. It was very difficult

for me to judge the content when there was absolutely nothing there. But it's clear that the members opposite are true believers in this non-substantive document.

I think it's very obvious to anybody who actually reads it that the government has the ability to tremendously understate the obvious and overstate the abstract.

On page 1 of the throne speech, about halfway down, it says: "Companies have downsized, some have moved, some have closed their doors for good." Well, it hasn't been "some" companies. This hasn't been a little drip of companies; it hasn't been a sliver. It has been 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of companies have closed their doors, not "some." We have had 62 mills in the north close up; 45,000 people in forestry out of work. And this government says some have downsized, some have closed up, some have moved on.

Maybe the members on the Liberal side think that's just "some." I think it's a tremendous failure of this Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was very glad to hear the opening comments of my colleague from Beaches–East York. I came to the throne speech. The House was full of visitors. Many, many cameras from everywhere were shining on us. It was a time for us to shine, a time for us to show that, as MPPs, we are leaders in our communities, we represent the entire population of the province of Ontario, we follow our procedures and the Lieutenant Governor reads the throne speech.

We were not 10 minutes into it when the heckling started. I can't tell you how disappointed I was in the behaviour of my colleagues. I haven't got the personal relationship with the Lieutenant Governor that my colleague from Beaches–East York has, but I respect the position, I respect the man and I respect the procedures that we have in this House. The least we could have done was sit down and listen to what he had to say.

We have plenty of time to speak about what we think about the content—and you're about to get an earful as to what I think about the throne speech—but that particular Monday afternoon was not the time. I'm happy he brought it up. This is the kind of behaviour that gives all of us a bad name. When people make jokes about politicians being at the bottom of the list, it is behaviour like this that paints us all with the same brush. This is behaviour that I do not condone.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to make comments toward my colleague opposite. He gave me the perfect opportunity to make comments on the Lieutenant Governor's throne speech the other day. I thought he did an excellent job in his 44 minutes of presentation. I suspect it's rather difficult for any Lieutenant Governor to provide a throne speech to this House and the guests who were here. He has to make it known as to what's in the speech but not to

show any emotion as to what he is stating, and I thought he did that perfectly with the right tone and manner, as all Lieutenant Governors have done.

Talking about decorum, it would have been nice for us, I think, if we could have clapped once in a while for what was in the throne speech because we do believe in what we have heard from it, but we know on this side of the House that we don't do that. Although it was tempting on some occasions—although we disagree on the content—to want to clap in certain situations, at least for me—I would not speak for other members—but I did not do that.

The member opposite says that we don't see what's in front of us, or something in that regard. I beg to differ. We do see what's in front of us and what the new economies will be. I think if the member were to travel down my way near Chatham-Kent, let's say if he were to go to Bob-Lo Island some day, he would see a lot of wind towers in my riding. I think there are another 50 or so going up shortly. The municipality is very keen on this particular endeavour, one that we envisioned some years ago. The landowners, who might not be farmers, also appreciate it very much. Of course, it is a green technology, which one cannot argue with. I welcome him having a visit to Chatham-Kent, on his way to Bob-Lo perhaps.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Beaches–East York has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank my colleagues from Mississauga South, Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, Nickel Belt and Chatham–Kent–Essex for their comments. I thank them, as well, particularly the members for Nickel Belt and Chatham–Kent–Essex, for the comments about the Lieutenant Governor. From time to time this can be a very raucous place, and I understand it and I appreciate it and I also see the humour in it many days, but I'm not sure that that can be done when the Queen's representative is in the chair. We should all, on those days, be on our best behaviour. I thank you for your comments enforcing what I had to say.

For my colleague from Mississauga South, for sure he is a true believer. Anyone who can truly believe in the comments from the throne speech and amplify them and believe them must really be a true believer in all that is Liberal. I say that with no umbrage and no malice, but the press, the newspapers, the assorted radio show programs are all talking about this document as being very fluffy, that it contains almost nothing. I do understand the need for long-term planning. I appreciate that need, but the short term is what people are looking at.

People are not looking at whether or not the Ring of Fire can be developed 10 or 15 years from now, although I am sure there is some hope that it can. People are not looking at long-term benefits of selling water purification; they are looking at whether or not their small community in northern Ontario can have its water purified.

I think the government has not looked at the immediate and has not looked at what is before their very face in order to try to look to some kind of ethereal, long-term future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's my pleasure to rise to speak on the opportunity that we have from the throne speech, and more importantly, the Open Ontario plan and the Ontario government's new initiatives outlined in the throne speech.

I should mention that I will be sharing my time with the member from Davenport.

I'd just like to make a brief comment on the comments of my friend from Beaches–East York. I was always taught the old adage at home: "If you can't say something nice about someone, don't talk about that person." Having said that, I will not make any comment about the hecklers.

I would, however, be quick to indicate that we would certainly agree most positively with the very positive comments about the Lieutenant Governor, David Onley. He definitely brings a new dimension to this Legislature, and I, and I'm sure everyone else here, thank him for that.

Since the previous throne speech, our government has come a long way in providing funding for services that we in Ontario need. Sometimes the opposition may speak in generalities, but I have to tell you, I believe our government has demonstrated real, tangible, positive results in what has been brought forward, certainly in this last term of the Legislature.

The results can be seen throughout my riding. This past November, just a couple of months ago, I was pleased to be part of the ribbon-cutting ceremony for an extremely expanded emergency department. The emergency department was originally built for 20,000 annual calls; it was now servicing about 45,000 annual calls. The expansion is complete, in place and open for 60,000 calls a year, well above the current level. So we have not only brought it up to date; we have looked to the future in our health care services. Indeed, we have tripled the capacity for accommodation for Ajax–Pickering and Durham region residents.

This expansion will not only bring more jobs to the community but it certainly brings down wait times, and that's one of the government's criteria. This project cost \$100 million. It's the largest single expansion in the municipality of Ajax in its history, and Ontario pays 90% of the expansion. Our government has also announced, literally at the same time, an additional \$2.6 million for complete training, hiring of new nurses, for our local hospital.

Actually, when I called out to say, "We have funding, it has come through immediately and all of your needs will be met to train new people and to bring on additional staff," they said, "Joe, are you sure that that money is for Ajax–Pickering?" I said, "I believe I am, but let me go back and check." Sure enough, it was as I had indicated: Ajax–Pickering. They were pleased, as was I.

I have to tell you, though, that any member of any party, whether it's the government, the opposition or the third party, probably just does what I did, and that is, the requests go in early, requests are followed up regularly

and good results always follow. So that's not just the government; all parties do that.

I can tell you that our next phase, which is called the complex continuing care unit, is under way as well, and we're on the road to the largest expansion ever in the history of our town.

In addition to that, we had more good news from the Ministry of Health, health being one of our two key components, certainly health and education—and of course in this new economy, a global economy, it's jobs, jobs, jobs. But at our hospital, we were fortunate enough to receive two additional intensive care beds for newborn children and also an additional two at our neighbours' hospital in Oshawa to ensure that newborns can get better care closer to home.

Our Minister of Health, Deborah Matthews, remarked on how crucial it is to give Ontario's most vulnerable babies the critical care supports they need to get better faster. The CEO of our Central East LHIN, Deborah Hammons, indicated that the additional four new—

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With all due respect to the member from Ajax-Pickering, this is a debate on the throne speech. I've not heard anything about the throne speech other than his local hospital—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Traditionally, during the throne speech debate, we allow a wide range of topics. I do believe the honourable member was on topic.

The honourable member.

0940

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I appreciate that. I do have a number of items that I am addressing that were certainly addressed throughout the throne speech. This new investment in our community ensures that our health care system, our hospitals, will be able to provide advanced and often life-saving care to newborns closer to home.

Further, I'd like to talk about investments in jobs. The first one that comes to my mind is called a "three in one" project in the city of Pickering. It's going to be something that the mayor and his council have actively chased for about eight years now. Pickering, as most people know, is kind of the gateway into Durham region. The three items that are going to be built, with our government's assistance and different levels of government's assistance, are, first of all, a 500-car garage to take transit riders' vehicles and have them parked. It will be a direct drop-off for GO Transit as part of the new Metrolinx plan. It will include a third part, and that will be a gigantic new office tower. I can tell you that the government of Ontario is involved, the federal government is involved, and GO Transit with Metrolinx. The city of Pickering, the major proponent, has done a great job on it. The construction company is 20 Vic.

The nice thing about this is that it's not going to impact the existing GO train station; it's going to be built on the other side of the highway, with a walk-across bridge. That's at the area of Liverpool and the 401, as you drive through beautiful Durham region.

Other investment items: We all sit here with bated breath, and I know some of my colleagues in Durham region in the opposition do as well, in reference to how General Motors goes. It's a different world—it will never be the same—but we have some good news from General Motors. Of course, they have a line going now, the Camaro line. I think Mayor John Gray of Oshawa took the first vehicle off that line. We have a line planned to bring back 700 of the 1,200 laid-off members, and that will be for the Buick Regal. That should be going later this year. They're looking at a November time frame. Also, they're considering the Impala with the new high-performance, 300-horsepower engines, and down the road they're also looking at the Cadillac XTS, a very beautiful car.

Things continue to improve there. I can tell you that our government was the first non-national government to stand up and say, "We're going to stand up for the automotive industry, and we're going to stand up for manufacturing in general." At one of the last events I was at in Oshawa—in the GM Centre, as a matter of fact, with my wife—the mayor came over and said, "Please pass on our thanks to the Premier and to the entire government. You stood up before the Prime Minister did and before the American President did, and you committed to our industry."

Mr. Jeff Leal: Joe, are you buying a new Camaro?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I can't afford a new Camaro; I drive older cars. But all of the vehicles I have are North-American made, I can assure you of that—a lot of them right in Oshawa.

There have also been a lot of questions on what's happening with our nuclear power, what's going on in Darlington and what's going on in Pickering. There's a big change taking place. It has been expected to come, and it's going to be here in the next 10 years. The Pickering nuclear plant is going to be tuned up, but it's going to be phased out in about 10 years' time. Minister Brad Duguid was at the GT Marketing Alliance international leaders' breakfast at the Ajax Convention Centre last week. He made clear the fact that there will be additional nuclear in Darlington.

I've got so much to say, but I have an excellent partner in this venture this morning, so I'm going to stand down to him and let him carry on in the next 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Davenport.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for permitting me to make a few remarks on the throne speech.

I'd like to also welcome some international students who are watching this televised debate this morning. I hope you will find it very interesting. It might be confusing to you, because you will find that literally all members of the opposition, without exception, will be highly critical of the throne speech. If you listen to them very carefully, you might even think that the sky is falling, and they see nothing whatsoever of benefit to the people of Ontario in this throne speech.

What's interesting is that, actually, we're paying them to criticize us. And when we were in the opposition, of

course, we got paid to criticize them, too. What an interesting institution. This is called British parliamentary democracy. It's an interesting concept. Here we are this morning, expecting them to criticize us and for us to say that this throne speech is a good idea.

In the end, it's a question of trust. Yes, there are very many details that have to be fleshed out. Of course, that will be done by the budget that we will be hearing within two or three weeks. In the end, as I said, it's a question of trust. The details will be different, but the details will flesh out the throne speech, and the details will flesh out what our government will be doing in the next few months—in fact, in the next five years. It is a five-year plan.

But when I say, "In the end, it's a question of trust," I mean that, and the question will be this: Who do you trust, in the end, to come up with the best idea that will steer the ship away from the rocks of an economic depression, a recession, into a safe harbour? Who do you trust, in the end? Who will steer the ship in the right direction? There's no doubt, whether we are true believers or otherwise—and even the opposition will have to agree—that the best captain is the Premier, and the best team is this team of the government. I hear no objections from the opposition, so this must be true.

We say that we trust our Premier and our team to come up with this five-year plan to take Ontario in the right direction, because things have really changed dramatically. The whole world, economically, has changed. How did this happen in the first place, that our whole manufacturing sector, to some degree, is being decimated? But it isn't just in Ontario; it's all over Canada. It's not just in Canada; it's really in every country.

Today you listen to the news, and what do you find? You find that Greek workers are going on strike. There are thousands and thousands of people right now in Athens who are striking against the government's austerity measures. So we in Ontario, in Canada, are really lucky, because we at least have some resources, and that, to some degree, is our history. We've always been identified in the past as hewers of wood and drawers of water. The towers of financial institutions, in fact, are really a sign of that history.

As some of the members of the opposition pointed out just yesterday on this throne speech, the trick is, how do we take our great resources that we have in Canada and add value and add work to these resources before we ship them out? It can't just be that we ship out logs and in return import back Kodak fine paper.

So the question really has been, and the trick has to be here, to ensure that our workers add value to the resources—

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We do not have a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'll ask the Clerk to check if there's a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): A quorum now being present, the honourable member for Davenport has the floor.

0950

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: The question I was raising was: How did this happen? How did this world change suddenly and so dramatically?

I remember that my own brother, just about 12 years ago, worked for a company, and this company was subsidized by our government to not only export our know-how but even export equipment that then could be used to compete against us. So we were subsidizing, to some degree, our own demise.

But having said that, we should also know that Canada is a very generous country. This generosity, in fact, has been shown everywhere that we do try and help people. We've said to those developing nations, "Here we are, we've got some expertise in Canada, and we're ready to help you out." Of course, now the world has changed, and the very people that we've helped are now competing against us. The question should be: Is this the way it should be? Or should we cut them out and only keep our wealth, our information and our technology for ourselves? Now the world is different. Now we have to make sure that we are supporting our innovative products.

The Premier and our team are absolutely correct when they say that there are two ways out of this. I can't think of any other way out of the recession and out of this sometimes depression. There are two ways out of it, and one of them you always keep saying to us in caucus: education, education, education. Yes, he is the education Premier, and it's working. We're going to have the most highly educated workforce that we've ever had in Canada. Class sizes are down. Test scores are up. Graduation rates are up. The five-year Open Ontario plan will make sure that we will be the first North American area to implement a full-day learning program for four- and five-year-olds. Great. Do we hear any applause from the opposition? No.

Our plan also means new opportunities in our colleges and universities. We'll be increasing spaces in colleges for 20,000 students. This five-year plan, Open Ontario, will also open up new post-secondary learning opportunities for Ontarians. We'll create a new online learning institute to give the Ontarians an opportunity to learn online from the best professors and best teachers. Do we hear any kudos from the opposition? No.

Finally, Open Ontario will open up Ontario to new foreign-born students, who will bring new, innovative ideas to our province and generate new revenues that can then be used to reinvest in colleges and universities.

It is clear that this is a good plan. This is a plan with details. This is a plan that can be followed, and this is a plan that will bring us out and help us when this recession is over. While we're here right now, we know that the recession—it's just baby steps to get the recession over with. Education is a way out, because only educa-

tion will bring us the good jobs and the innovative experience.

I want to talk about innovation. Let me simply say this: We don't have to reinvent the wheel. What is new and what has to be done in Ontario is to ensure that there will be marketable new products, new inventions and new innovation. How do you do that without education? Education has to be the key. It will be the key to bring Ontario out into a competitive market. How are our kids going to compete against Chinese kids who are willing to work harder, stay in school longer, and yet we say, "Well, we want to compete in a way that is fair and in a way that we get value for our money"? But how are we going to compete when we want \$10.25 an hour and the same Chinese worker gets 60 cents to 80 cents an hour? That marketability, that kind of an economy, is over, and the Premier recognizes that. So the only way out—the only good way out—is to try to ensure that we are leaders in education. We'll have to look for those opportunities, but the basic thing has to be an educated workforce that is the best, not just in North America, but one that can compete internationally.

Are there storm clouds on the horizon? Yes, there certainly are. We're living in the midst of climate change, and we're still going to the altar of growth and we're worshipping there. We say that we need growth, we need more jobs and we need an educated workforce. But we have to change. There's a change taking place, and it has to be done and it has to be led by us, hopefully. It may just be that the human growth area may be changed or may be over, that now we have to move away from individualism to a much more co-operative structure through the united nations in the world. That's our way to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was interesting listening to the member from Davenport. I think it really illustrates the contradictions of the Liberal Party. At the beginning of this speech, he said that the details would come out, the details would be fleshed out, the details would be different. Then at the end, he said, "This throne speech is full of details." Full of details? But at the beginning, it was not.

I think it also exposes the false premise of their understanding of the problems. Here, he was talking about education: "All we need to do is be smart, all we have to do is be well educated, and that is how we will compete with foreign countries and build our economy." I'd like to mention to the member from Davenport that it takes more than just education. All he has to do is look up at Timmins, look up at Xstrata. We have a copper smelting firm that is leaving this province.

This tremendous industry is not leaving for China, Mexico or India; it is leaving for the province of Quebec, not because the people in Quebec are smarter—as the member from Davenport suggested, "All we have to do is be well educated"—they're leaving because the cost of doing business is cheaper—not the labour rates, but the

cost of energy is less; the cost of the regulatory burden, the red tape, is less. We are not losing our jobs to China; we're losing them to Quebec in this case.

This throne speech does nothing to address the economic failures of this Liberal government, and indeed—although the member thinks that the sky may be falling for some, and that this is false, it has fallen tremendously for very many.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was rather interesting to listen to the member from Ajax-Pickering talk about the tremendous amount of joy and support that the new neonatal unit had in his riding. It was in stark contrast with what I heard in Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Welland and St. Catharines. One of the deputants actually said it best when he said, "How it could be that Niagara Falls, being the province's, the country's and, I would say, the world's honeymoon capital, does not have a maternity ward anymore? How could it be that there will never be another Ontarian born in Fort Erie?" There will never be another Ontarian born in Port Colborne because their maternity ward has been closed. There will never be any more. Nobody will be able to say, "I was born in Port Colborne," or, "I was born in Fort Erie." There will be no more babies born there because the maternity wards have been closed.

What the member was describing is a situation that pits rural areas against bigger centres. The role of community hospitals is being eroded.

I'm happy for his constituents, that they were able to hold onto a service as basic as being born in your hometown. Isn't this something that a town of 30,000 people should be able to have, to have babies in their own town? Well, it's considered rural Ontario and it's no more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It was indeed a pleasure to listen to the remarks from my two very distinguished colleagues, the member from Ajax-Pickering and the member from Davenport.

Indeed, I was very concerned with the decorum on Monday when the Lieutenant Governor delivered his speech. I think it was summed up particularly well in a statement that was made in this House yesterday by Mr. Levac, the member from Brant, outlining the long-time tradition that we have in this country, something that we inherited from Westminster: respect for the crown. When the crown delivers the throne speech, we ask people to be on their very best behaviour out of respect, first, for the individual and, secondly, for the office that one holds.

1000

I remember I was a young staffer here in 1989 when Queen Elizabeth, the late Queen Mother, came to Ontario for a celebration of the 50th anniversary of her famous tour along with King George in 1939. On that particular day, everybody was out to see the Queen Mother on that occasion. Mr. Speaker, you may have been a member back then; I'm not sure. But she came here and delivered

an address. It was one of the great occasions for this Legislature, to hear from the Queen Mum, whom Canadians, Ontarians and Peterborians have had great affection for.

It's interesting that this throne speech talks about hope, and that's very important as we move forward. Next Wednesday, I'm told, the Conference Board of Canada will release a report on the Ontario jobs situation. It indicates that unemployment has now peaked and that we expect that some 223,000 new jobs will be created in the province of Ontario in 2010, which will shave approximately 1.3 points off our unemployment rate—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments on the presentations made by the members from Ajax-Pickering and Davenport.

I want to thank them for their explanation, because I did have the privilege of being here when the throne speech was read, and when it was completed I couldn't see anything positive that had been said, or very little positive said. What I was even more surprised at, as I was going home, was that on the radio in my car somebody was reporting the comments from the government side about the throne speech. This throne speech was going to create a million jobs, from the report, and I said, "Well, that's strange, because I didn't hear that in the throne speech at all." All I heard about jobs in the throne speech were things that the government has already done, which is not announcing where we're going; it's looking back at where we've been, where they have made announcements but not yet delivered on them. Obviously, they are expecting people to believe now that they're going to deliver on it in the future. It would seem to me that if these jobs were going to be created in that term of office from the previous throne speech, we wouldn't be hearing about it again in this throne speech.

Another thing that I think was very important: The member from Ajax-Pickering was speaking about the discussion in the throne speech about changing the way hospitals are funded. I would be the first to agree that a change needs to be made on how hospitals are funded. But, first of all, if we're going to go with the money following the patient, going strictly on the competitive nature and getting it from the most economical places, the economies of scale will dictate that it will go to the large urban centres, and in fact those hospitals in small-town and rural Ontario will be seeing a decrease in funding as time goes on, because they will be looking at the big picture of how many are being done as opposed to how much each one is costing to get done. So I think a lot more work needs to be done before they implement that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Either the member for Ajax-Pickering or the member for Davenport has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I want to thank the members from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Nickel Belt, Peterborough and Oxford for their comments.

While we said we do not want to be confrontational, it might just be interesting to note that when the NDP came to power in Saskatchewan, I just wanted to remind the member, because of her comments, they closed 52 rural hospitals. That's quite a number.

In terms of what will actually help Ontario to get out of the recession and be really competitive internationally, it's interesting to note that, yes, this throne speech is full of details. I've indicated in fact what some of those details are, and unless you do not wish to listen, it's easy to see what they are. I don't want to repeat them again, but there are so many details in this throne speech that it is beyond belief that you can't even identify a few.

So I say to my honourable colleague, while the throne speech is still full of details, of course some of these details will have to be fleshed out. This is only natural. You don't bring all the details into a throne speech. You have some details to be fleshed out later on in the budget, and that will happen two weeks from now. The honourable member knows what the process here in this House will be, so we don't take this criticism too seriously.

I wish just to make one more comment, and that is, it is education that will help us, and it is this education Premier who has the vision for education in Ontario to make us competitive. But in addition, without an educated workforce, how else are you going to compete and produce these innovative products that are necessary in order to compete internationally? Someone has to bring these products from the universities, from research, into the marketplace. That's important.

We have the plan, and it is clear what the throne speech—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to speak about the non-content throne speech that we have before the House.

I've been watching with great interest over the years this Liberal government and how they've been conducting the administration of our province, and it has always confused me. I know the member from Beaches-East York used the term that they're all absolute "true believers." No matter what is in front of them, they do not see it. They are just true believers. I believe that there's merit to that statement by the member from Beaches-East York. It has always puzzled me just how this Liberal administration can say one thing, do another thing, do the wrong thing, never get the right thing done, and they always get full support from their caucus.

It was interesting: During my little recess from the House—I enjoy reading and I enjoy learning new words. One of the words that I looked up—it was quite surprising to me, but the word "daltonism" is a real word. There is a word "daltonism." Daltonism refers to a defective gene within people that prevents them from distinguishing between red and green. They cannot tell the difference between those two colours, and it's based on this defective gene. And I thought: Did somebody make this up? No; there was a scientist—I believe his name was

James Dalton—who found this defective gene within people that prevented them from seeing the difference between red and green.

I thought: That must be the answer to how the Liberal caucus acts and behaves. They are colour-blind. When they see red ink, they see green energy. When they see green energy, maybe they don't see the red ink. I guess that's what it is. They can't distinguish that difference. It was pretty amazing that we could find—what is it?—70 members, 72 members who all have that defective gene all within one caucus. But sure enough, they are colour-blind. They cannot tell the difference between their actions and what is going on with it. They're colour-blind: Is deficit surplus or is surplus deficit? Is debt wealth or is wealth debt?

They're confused. I think that was very clear during the throne speech. They are confused. They do not know what it is that they're actually doing or why they're doing it—and of course, no content as well.

As I stated earlier, in here they're very good at understating the obvious and overstating the abstract. As I mentioned earlier, in the throne speech they say that some companies have downsized—some companies. Well, hundreds and thousands of companies, with hundreds of thousands of people, are not "some." Let's not understate the reality of this.

1010

Further on in the throne speech it says, "No place has escaped the great recession...." I would say that no place has, but I'll also say that there is no jurisdiction in this country that has fallen further and faster during this great recession than here, our province of Ontario. We have lost ground in relation to all others significantly. We are now a have-not province. So let's be honest and truthful within our discussions and our debate. Let's not try to sugar-coat or understate those obvious failings.

I think that's why we are critical. We're expected to be critical of the throne speech, but our criticism has to also have merit. It has to have justification. It is justifiable. It is a meritorious argument to criticize a failure.

Now, do we go around and clap you on the back when you do something well? That's not our job. That's not what we're paid for. It doesn't happen too often when we have that opportunity anyway.

In this throne speech we have a lot of unaccountable, immeasurable thoughts. That's what's in it. The people of Ontario can't hold the Liberal government to account on this throne speech because there are no measurable targets, there are no measurable objectives. It's all fluff. Everybody can see that. We haven't got any measure in there of how we are going to reduce—how much red tape and costly overregulation is this Liberal administration going to remove in order that our economy can grow? There's not even a mention of it, not even a mention that regulation and overregulation is a problem, even though it was just a year ago—two years ago, pardon me—that the Premier said, "We are going to remove one regulation for every one that we bring in." That was another promise. Who knows what happened to that? He forgot, I guess. I'm going to be critical on that one as well.

I think it's also important to expose when the government brings forth contradictory statements or legislation or statutes. We should identify that. There is no better example than the hype of the Ring of Fire. I want to see the north developed. I want to see wealth created in the north and I want to see that wealth shared and benefit the people in the north. That's what I'd like to see. I know there are people on the Liberal side who would like to see that happen as well. Well, some, anyway.

But look back and see what legislation you brought out last year which will prevent the Ring of Fire from ever being developed. Bill 191, the Far North Act, excludes any and all development on a quarter-million square kilometres of northern Ontario. That means no roads, no ice roads, no bridges, no trains, no mines, no transmission lines—nothing. It's an exclusive, empty park on a quarter-million square kilometres—50% of the north.

How are we going to develop the Ring of Fire when, on one hand, you're saying, "We want to do it," and on the other hand, "We're not going to let anybody get there"? That's a contradiction; that's hypocrisy; or it's something else, but it is not compatible. Those two ideas are not compatible with each other. So something needs to be done here. Where is it in the throne speech that they are going to fix that? Nowhere. We're getting contradictions, and as I mentioned to the member from Davenport when he spoke—and he used some interesting terms. He used the terms that we have to "end the individualism" and we have to "become co-operative." I was listening to those words, and I'm sure the members opposite heard those words: "an end to individualism" and "the beginning of co-operative"? What? That sounds very socialist in my books. Is that the intent of—

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Are we over?

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Is that the intent of this throne speech? Is that just a socialist document to be brought forth under the guise of a throne speech?

I'll be happy to finish off my comments at a later time. Thank you.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30 a.m., at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm very pleased to welcome the grade 7 class from Stonebridge Public School and teacher Meaghan Phillips. They're here to surprise their classmate page Jullian Yapeter.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, my favourite page, Julia Louis, has more fans here—this is a daily occurrence. Today, it's her sister Joanna and her mother, Josiefina. I'd like to welcome them here.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Lakewoods Public School will be joining us shortly to watch question period, and I hope they thoroughly enjoy it when they arrive.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome the outstanding students from Regina Mundi Catholic School in my riding who are here today and their teachers. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I am delighted to introduce to the Legislature the national president of the Lithuanian community, Ms. Joana Kuras-Lasys, who is inviting all of us to celebrate, when we raise the flag after question period, the 20th anniversary of Lithuanian independence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Cambridge and page Quinton Lowe, I'd like to welcome his mother, Liliane Chandonnet, and his grandfather Pon Hasheg in the public gallery today.

As well, on behalf of the member from Oxford and page Rachael Heleniak, seated in the Speaker's gallery, is Rachael's mother, Edith Heleniak. Welcome to Queen's Park. I can say that if you're ever looking for great meat, go to Norwich Packers. And thanks for the potato pancakes that I'm going to enjoy for lunch today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Acting Premier. On page 7 of the so-called Open Ontario plan, you applaud the Conservatives for creating a national regulator and say that it should be headquartered in Toronto. But the media are reporting that the national regulator is rejecting Canada's worst government.

Is Premier McGuinty's poor economic performance killing his ability to deliver on this throne speech promise?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, there is not yet a national securities regulator, and I would remind him of that. I would remind him that this government has supported that and will continue to do that.

I would remind him that 80% of Canada's financial sector is located here in Toronto. I would remind him that that sector overwhelmingly supports the location of the securities regulator's headquarters here in Toronto. I would ask the federal government not to take the federal regulator out of Toronto and out of Ontario. It only makes sense. This is one of the world's leading financial sectors.

Our government, working with the Toronto Financial Services Alliance—Janet Ecker is very involved in that; you might be familiar with her—believe very strongly that we need a national security regulator, and it should be headquartered right here in Toronto. Stand up for your province, stand up for what's right and don't just toady to your federal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you for that answer from the minister. It has only been a week, but already Premier McGuinty's so-called "plan" has turned out to be nothing more than empty promises.

While Ontario used to be the economic engine of Confederation, the McGuinty Liberals have turned us into a have-not province whose performance no longer warrants placing the national securities regulator in Toronto.

Minister Duncan arrogantly said it would be a slap in the face to Toronto and the financial services community if the headquarters weren't here. Did you ever consider it might be an indictment of the McGuinty Liberals and Canada's worst economic performance?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Number one: Ontario is the third-largest financial centre in North America, and it has grown every year under this government. Number two: more than 450,000 net new jobs in this province; a solid sector in this province.

I say to the member opposite, I say to the Conservative Party of Ontario: Stand up for Ontario; stand up for Toronto. Don't let them move the financial securities regulator out of Toronto. Let's keep building a better sector. Let's build new jobs. Let's support our province, to build a stronger Canada.

They just don't get it. It's about a better future for Ontario, not about selling out to your federal brethren in Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'll say one thing: The minister sure is full of hot air.

Ontario used to lead the nation. There was a time when Toronto would be the only choice for the headquarters of a national securities regulator. Ontario can lead again, but not under this arrogant, out-of-touch and out-of-ideas Premier and his McGuinty Liberals.

The McGuinty Liberals have turned Ontario into a have-not province, collecting welfare from the federal government for the first time in history. What made Canada's worst government think the national regulator would ignore Canada's worst economic performance when deciding where to locate its headquarters?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: So where does the member want it? Does he want that headquarters in Vancouver? Is that where you want it? Do you want it in Victoria? Do you want it in Edmonton? Is it Edmonton, or do you want it in Calgary? Is it Montreal where you want the headquarters; or is it Saint John, New Brunswick; or St. John's, Newfoundland? Where would you put that headquarters, I ask you?

Today's RBC report is clear and unequivocal: Ontario's economy is growing again. It will exceed the national average because of the plans that this government has laid out.

The financial services sector is all about Toronto; it's all about Ontario. We would welcome regional offices across the country, but its headquarters belongs right here in the financial capital.

You ought to stand up for Ontario and Toronto and not toady to your federal brethren in Ottawa who want to take it out of Ontario.

FINANCIAL SERVICES SECTOR

Mr. Norm Miller: Let me be very, very clear: The Ontario PC Party supports the national regulator being located in Toronto. We're afraid this government is going to jeopardize that.

On to my next question, again to the Acting Premier: Premier McGuinty called the throne speech the Open Ontario plan, but Ontario families don't use McGuinty-speak. For them, 24 words on deficit reduction don't really count as a plan. It doesn't get any better with your 28-word plan to make Toronto an elite financial centre.

Why would you tell Ontario families you have a plan to build Toronto into an elite financial centre when you don't?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of Finance.

1040

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have a plan; it's clear and it's unequivocal. We need a national securities regulator. I would welcome you to join us. I'm glad to hear you've changed your mind between your last question and this question and that you want the securities regulator here in Toronto. I'm glad you're putting Ontario's interests ahead of your federal brethren.

I want to remind the member that they added \$48 billion to Ontario's debt through one of the greatest growth periods in history. Their interest as a percentage of revenue was much higher than it is today. They left a hidden deficit, which this government cleaned up, and it's the right thing to do.

I'll remind him that the stimulus we spent last year is creating more than 200,000 jobs here in Ontario, according to the conference board, and today the Royal Bank says that Ontario is going to lead Canada in growth in the coming year. This economy is getting bigger, it's getting better, and it's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: I don't think the finance minister and this government are in any place to talk about deficit and debt with their record.

The McGuinty Liberals' 28-word plan just isn't credible. Don't take my word for it; take the word of financial advisers who manage income funds for Ontario seniors and families. CI Financial and Mackenzie Financial say they would advise Ontario families to set up their accounts in Alberta and avoid your greedy HST tax grab. Adam Felesky, whose firm manages \$3 billion in funds, says, "Why wouldn't you set up your fund in Alberta? We're supposed to be low-cost."

How can anyone trust the McGuinty Liberals to build an elite financial sector in Toronto when the financial sector is relocating funds to provinces that don't have HST tax on management fees and mutual funds?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The mutual fund industry is one of those that hasn't supported our jobs plan. You know what? They're wrong. I think their clients ought to take their money out of there, because we have a strong economy here. We're about building the financial services sector.

Let me just remind the member, who doesn't want the securities commission to be located here, that this sector, in the last five years, has added 62,000, or a 3.3% increase, in the workforce in this area. I have had the opportunity to speak to all of our major banks, insurance companies and a whole variety of others, and they all believe that those securities commission headquarters should be right here in Toronto.

I'm glad the member changed his mind between the first question and the second question. I go along with what the Royal Bank said today: This economy is coming back. It's coming back bigger, it's coming back better, and it's coming back stronger, in spite of your opposition to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: A week hasn't even passed since the throne speech, and your latest plan is no more credible than previous McGuinty Liberal plans to hire 9,000 nurses, build 35,000 new long-term-care beds, shut down coal-fired generators and create permanent full-time jobs. You're not just driving retirement investments to other provinces. Som Seif, president of Claymore Investments, which manages \$3.2 billion in funds, says, "The US market is much more developed and not a single penny in taxes is charged.... What you will end up with is billions of dollars leaving Canada."

How can anyone trust the McGuinty Liberals' so-called plan when your greedy HST tax grab is hollowing out Ontario's financial services sector?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I reject Claymore and anybody like that. I think Ontario and Canada are the best places in the world to invest. I don't think I'd be following the advice of an American financial institution at this point in time.

There's no doubt that there are challenges in our economy. I'm going to continue, and this Premier and this party are going to continue, to build the economy here in Ontario. We're not going to tell the federal government to relocate the securities regulator out of Ontario, as that member and his party seem to want to do. We're not going to play games with that kind of nonsense.

I would remind the member opposite about today's Royal Bank report that says, "Although the HST will result in certain currently exempt products and services being taxed, moving to a value-added tax structure will make the ... system more economically efficient and will improve the competitiveness of Ontario."

That's what we're about. We're not about driving institutions out of this province. We're—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, the Premier refused to tell the House what was on the table at a \$5,000-a-plate dinner he had with developers and other Liberal supporters.

My question to the Acting Premier is a simple one: Don't the people of Ontario have a right to know what was discussed at that dinner?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I would remind the member opposite, and all of the members of this House, that what the Premier did state yesterday very clearly is that we are blessed to live in a province and in a country where we have the freedom to associate, where we have political parties that are funded by the people of our province. One of the major ways that parties raise funds is with fundraisers, and that is a fact of all political parties, whether you are in the Liberal, Progressive Conservative or New Democratic Party. They all receive donations; they all receive funds from the general public.

What the Premier said yesterday is that we do take the responsibility of making sure the Liberal Party of Ontario is well resourced so that we can continue to mount campaigns, so we can win elections, so we can continue to do the good work investing in hospitals, investing in schools, protecting our environment, investing in police—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A lot of people in this province don't have \$5,000 to set aside for private dinners with the Premier. If your local ER is closing, your daycare is closing, and your job and local resources are getting shipped out of the province, you actually have to struggle very hard to get the Premier of this province's attention. But others have no problem at all getting that attention.

My question is: Don't the people of Ontario who couldn't afford a ticket at least deserve to know what was on the table and what was discussed at the Premier's private fundraiser?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: As members of this assembly, we all enjoy the privilege of representing the interests of people in our ridings. We bring those issues to this House and they are debated. It is important for people in Ontario, as well, to appreciate that as members of a political party, we also look to raise funds within our community and within our province for our party so that we can run campaigns. The honourable member runs as a New Democratic Party member; she raises funds for her party in the very same ways that Liberals raise funds to support our members. So it's not inconsistent, and I think the honourable member might want to remember that their party survives in the very same way that our party does as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, this is a government that refused to hold hearings on their unfair tax scheme. They ignore parents who are worried about losing local child care centres. They cover their ears when families raise

concerns about ER closures. But some people are getting the government's time and sympathetic ear. Why can't the government simply provide the public with some basic information about this dinner?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I've tried to make the point that all politicians in the province of Ontario have a responsibility to support their party.

I would say to the honourable member, if we want to talk about dinner parties and dollars, I have here an invitation. There's an event on April 1 where the leader of the third party, Andrea Horwath, is inviting people to come to an event, and they only have to pay \$1,800 a table to be at that event. So it goes to the point I have made, that as political parties, we raise money to support our party. The Liberal Party does it in Ontario, as do the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party. That is part of the privilege of living in a democracy.

I would again remind her that on April—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I invite the Acting Premier to attend that fundraising event. It's quite public. It's an open invitation on Facebook, so anybody is welcome to attend and participate in that event.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question, in fact, is to the Acting Premier again. Yesterday, the Premier refused to answer some basic questions about a private meeting that he held with developers in Simcoe. The government has been facing a growing outcry about their plans for Simcoe and decisions to give developers what they want, even if it contradicts the government's own growth plans in that area.

Can we clear the air once and for all today? What was discussed at that private meeting?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm going to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to respond, please.

1050

Hon. James J. Bradley: Yesterday, the New Democratic Party was trying to suggest that something that didn't happen happened. As you know, there was an independent, arm's-length facilitator, who, after years of Innisfil and Barrie arguing over boundaries—and this happens very often. The facilitator put forward a recommendation for the boundaries and the government accepted that recommendation.

There are always going to be some people who are not happy when you have two municipalities, and we've all gone through this locally; one of them is not going to be happy with those boundaries because both would probably like to be able to grow in many of those cases.

Barrie is a booming community, a growing community. The facilitator made his report, recommended it, and it became legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: News reports actually say that the provincial development facilitator recommended that

Barrie get 2,500 acres from Innisfil, but the government, for some reason, decided to give them over 5,500 acres. So, many people are asking very serious questions about the government's plan for the Simcoe region and want to know who is driving that agenda.

Yesterday, the Premier refused to discuss a private meeting he had with developers in the area, and those developers refused to talk to reporters.

Again I'm asking: Can the government clear the air today and tell us where the dinner was held, who exactly was at the dinner and what matters were discussed there?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Let me put it in context for the member again. In 2005, the town of Innisfil asked the province to help resolve a long-standing dispute between the two communities. In 2006, the province referred the dispute to an independent facilitator to work with them. The facilitator made a recommendation on how to change the boundary; Barrie accepted it and Innisfil did not accept it.

In 2008-09, Minister Watson repeatedly asked Barrie and Innisfil officials to resolve the matter. On September 25, 2008, Minister Watson wrote Barrie's mayor, and on March 9, 2009, he asked Barrie and Innisfil officials, "Would you please do it?"

Subsequent to that, there was a bill that was introduced in the House, and I think that bill took about seven months to go through this House. There were all kinds of hearings. People could have all kinds of representations. Finally, there was a vote on the bill.

You're trying to make something out of nothing. This is exactly—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister seems to refer extensively to this report, yet, strangely, the government won't release the facilitator's report. People see this government making key decisions in Simcoe and wonder why exactly those decisions are being made.

Yesterday, the Premier was asked about a meeting he held with a group of people who have a lot at stake in that region. It wasn't an open meeting. People couldn't attend and watch and listen, but they certainly have a right to know whether public business was on the table at that meeting.

Once again, I'm asking this government to tell us where exactly the dinner was held, who was at that dinner and what the issues were that were being discussed there.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Listen, the New Democratic Party is trying to revolve this around the dispute between the two communities.

When we had the committee of the House—and those who are members of this House would know, especially members who live in the area—the committee even went up there. The committee went to Simcoe as part of the hearings to hear from everybody. There were all kinds of public hearings on this. Everybody had an opportunity—

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know some members are happy with the results and some members are not happy, depending on the municipalities that are represented, but this was a dispute between two municipalities that an independent facilitator made a recommendation on, and that recommendation was a recommendation that the government accepted.

I don't know why you continue to ask these kinds of questions when it was based on the facilitator's recommendation to the government, and this went through the House—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is to the Acting Premier. Today, we learned that your government's public sector reduction plan actually means that tax collectors are moving from the provincial Ministry of Revenue to the Canada Revenue Agency, complete with a six-month severance package. Apparently, they'll continue to work in the same office, they're not going to miss a day of work, and they're being paid up to \$45,000 to change their business cards.

My constituents in Wellington-Halton Hills know that there's only one taxpayer. My question to the Acting Premier is this: Why are tax collectors getting hefty six-month severance packages simply for changing job titles?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Thanks to the member for the question. First of all, we are honouring provisions of a collective agreement that was in place. We have managed to protect, in the Durham region, some 1,250 jobs. We think it's important to honour agreements that you sign.

We are delighted that the federal government is taking on those employees. This was part of what we think is an appropriate arrangement overall as we transition to the single harmonized tax. I remind the member opposite that we also harmonized the collection of corporate taxes, and we didn't lose many jobs as a result of that.

In arriving at this arrangement with the federal government, we felt it appropriate to work with the bargaining unit and with our employees and honour the collective agreement that was in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's an interesting answer, because the Minister of Revenue has been going around for months saying that one of the benefits of the HST is that it will reduce the provincial payroll.

Let's get this straight: The HST tax-grab means tax collectors will be moved from the provincial to the federal government, but they are still being paid and given a hefty severance package. Could you explain to my constituents in Wellington-Halton Hills—many of whom are working two part-time jobs to make ends meet, many of whom dream of making \$45,000 a year but aren't—why

tax collectors are being handed that much when they aren't even missing a single day of work?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes, I can: The Conservative government introduced that clause in the collective agreement. It's an interesting position that he takes today, having had a Conservative government put that clause in the collective agreement and now saying that we shouldn't honour it.

We think it's important to work with our partners, particularly on something like that. I'm sorry the Conservative Party wouldn't stand up and—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark will withdraw the comment.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This will result in savings. These are 1,251 employees being transferred. It will result in savings year after year. This is one of the important benefits. This is why so many groups have supported the plan. This is why Conservatives support the plan. I think it's important that we build on this and build a better future for Ontario.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Yesterday after question period, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing told reporters that the government decision to hand land over to Barrie was based on a facilitator's report, which he then refused to share with the reporters. When the legislative committee of which I was a member travelled up to the Simcoe county hearing, we heard depositions from affected communities, but the previous Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing refused to release that same report. Will the minister release that report if, in fact, the report was the basis for the decision you made?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The report the member makes reference to is a recommendation that was made by the facilitator. You have available to you the map the facilitator had, and that was how he reported to people. He said, "Here is what I would recommend, having heard both sides."

This is a long-standing dispute between the two municipalities, and it's a bitter dispute. It always is between municipalities. He made a recommendation, and you can look on the map and see what he recommended to the government of Ontario. Subsequent to that report, legislation was crafted, even with the previous minister trying hard to get the two municipalities themselves to resolve the matter.

I've had our staff check with the facilitator, and he has confirmed that's exactly what happened. I don't know what you're getting at. I really don't.

1100

Mr. Michael Prue: Perhaps the minister should read his file, then, because the facilitator was a man by the name of Allan Wells. According to news reports from the Barrie Examiner at the time, the facilitator proposed turn-

ing control of 2,500 acres over to Barrie, and a year later, the government proposed legislation granting Barrie 5,500 acres—more than twice as much. It sure seems a big discrepancy to me that if the legislation is based on the facilitator's decision, it went from 2,500 to 5,500.

Did the \$5,000-a-plate dinner play a part in the larger land transfer? That's what we want to know.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would caution the honourable member of imputing any sort of motive.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I repeat to the member and to all members of the New Democratic Party who are trying to fashion something here—and I understand; I was in opposition. I remember what you do in opposition. I am telling the member that the two sides were disputing this. There was a lot of discussion that took place at committee. They made their representations to committee—their local members who had an interest in this, who would not be happy with the results and others who might be happy with it, according to what municipality they reside in. I can tell you that our staff has talked to the facilitator, who said that what we proposed, and that became part of the legislation that this government proposed, was what he had recommended.

Now, we all recognize as well—and I think you do. You know the area well—that it's a huge growing area at the present time, with far less developable land than most municipalities in Ontario. And yet it's a growing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

JOB CREATION

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. The 2009 budget announced infrastructure investment of \$32.5 billion. The investment is for roads, schools, hospitals, recreation facilities and affordable housing. The investment means hundreds of thousands of jobs and huge economic growth, but some critics have been questioning the estimated job numbers. Minister, what evidence do you have to support the job estimates?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm happy to share with the member the Conference Board of Canada conclusions in their recent report released yesterday.

But first, I want to say that the Leader of the Opposition, when he was on TVOntario, said of this \$32.5-billion investment in infrastructure that the member was referring to, "I don't think that's the right approach. It's too much."

This report proves that he was wrong and we were right to invest these dollars. From 2006 to 2010, every dollar we spend on public infrastructure added \$1.11 to our GDP. We were right to invest this money in Ontario. The Leader of the Opposition was wrong.

Over the same period, 2006 to 2010, the report estimates a total of 822,335 person-years of employment. We were right; they were wrong. The job estimates that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, thank you for verifying the details supporting the estimates, but I need to know two further things: What progress are you actually making in getting the money to where it's needed to start the projects and create the jobs; and secondly, how can my constituents inform themselves where these projects are so they can take advantage of the job opportunities?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to let you and your constituents know that at ontario.ca/infrastructure they can track these projects going on right across the province. We're open—it's Open Ontario—so that we can watch these very important infrastructure projects that are creating jobs across this province develop.

We predicted that there would be 300,000 jobs created by this \$32.5-billion investment; the Conference Board of Canada yesterday confirmed there's more than that that's going to be created, that our estimates were indeed conservative.

This is good news for Ontario. The conference board suggests that there would have been 70,000 workers out of work today had we listened to the Leader of the Opposition and not invested these dollars. This was good news for Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Ontario families can't trust the McGuinty Liberals when they can't even make it through the week without breaking the promises made in their throne speech. On Monday, you said the question facing Ontarians is whether health care is going to be there for our children. Well, by Wednesday, families and patients in Brockville learned that the answer is no. The McGuinty Liberals are cutting 17 front-line staff and 15 beds from the Brockville General Hospital, yet you pumped \$15 million into Grace hospital the day before voting began in the Toronto Centre election. Are you punishing families in Brockville for how they voted?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me begin by just saying that the member opposite doesn't need to read the question she's given. She can actually put her own brain to work when it comes to question period. That question—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I would just remind all members that we are here to represent our constituents. Yes, we may bring forward views that may be at odds with one another, but at the same time we owe it to each other, as much as possible, to be considerate. Comments like that are not helpful.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I apologize, Speaker.

When it comes to Brockville—we've made tremendous investments in health care right across this province. We've got almost 900,000 more people attached to primary care. We've got family health teams—150 health

teams—up and running; 20 more are coming and another 30 beyond that. We've brought down wait times. We've tremendously improved the infrastructure of health care in this province.

We are asking hospitals to look very closely at where they are spending their money to ensure that we all get the very best value for the dollars we spend when it comes to health care. I know that the LHINs have been working very hard with the hospitals. The hospitals have come up with plans. Those are responsible plans. I encourage the member opposite to actually understand the work that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm actually asking this question on behalf of Steve Clark, our newly elected member from Leeds–Grenville. He hasn't been sworn in yet, but I am asking this question on his behalf because he is already out at work asking his constituents about their concerns. They're very disturbed by the cynicism and arrogance that is being shown by this government. They want me to ask you how cutting front-line staff and reducing beds equate to health care. Why are you saying that you're committing to improving patient care when in Brockville you clearly are not?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very proud of the investments we've made in health care. We are committed to spending more next year than we spent this year, just as we have every year up till now.

I think it's important to remind the member opposite that her party platform calls for a freeze in spending. We know what a freeze in spending means. I don't think it's appropriate that in some hospitals, in some communities, it's okay to advocate for an increase, but across the province you want to say “freeze.” It doesn't make sense. It's irresponsible. I just would like to remind the member opposite that when her party has a platform of freezing spending, that means dramatic cuts across this province.

SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. On February 17, the Social Benefits Tribunal issued a ruling that was an indictment of the ministry guidelines that the McGuinty government is using to cut funding assistance for families of children with severe disabilities. The tribunal ruled that these arbitrary guidelines run contrary to the intent of the law. That was their ruling.

What is the minister's plan for bringing the guidelines for the assistance for children with severe disabilities program into step with the Ontario Disability Support Program Act?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: In the privileged role that I have, I spend every opportunity to talk with families across the province about how we can better help them help their children and ensure that children with disabilities are better cared for and looked after in our community.

In each instance, we look to a holistic package of services that exist. We certainly take into account the advice that we receive. We work across ministries, between the Ministry of Community and Social Services and ourselves at the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. It is critically important that we look to always improve the service that we can deliver to kids in Ontario, and we do that every single day.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Talk does not pay the bills for these families that are extremely put out in terms of the costs of caring for their children.

John Wood was forced to appeal to the tribunal after the ministry used its guidelines last April to reduce his ACSD funding to \$25 from \$430 a month for his daughter's expensive life-and-death medical needs. The tribunal fully restored the funding retroactively, noting that the ministry's income ceiling chart is a self-imposed guideline and is not the law. The law says that to qualify for funding, the child must have a severe disability and live at home. The parents must have extraordinary expenses and be the primary caregivers.

What is this minister doing to ensure that parents who qualify can actually receive ACSD funding in accordance with the law, without being trapped by their phony guidelines?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I've been working, through my ministry, to set up a meeting with Mr. Wood to discuss his concerns specifically.

Hearing directly from parents about how we can move forward, in terms of ensuring our government's commitment to continue to improve the services and supports for children and youth with special needs, is of utmost importance. That's why we've increased spending in the program from \$63 million to \$90 million since we took office—a 42% increase.

Absolutely, there is more to do, and we look to continual improvement in the services that we provide children in this province. That's why there's a Ministry of Children and Youth Services. That's why I feel privileged to be able to continue to do this work.

I look forward to speaking with Mr. Wood and other parents across the country, as we do on a daily basis, to help improve the services that we provide to our most vulnerable children.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, I believe that improving the education of our young people is the most important priority for the future of Ontario. In the recent throne speech, the government announced that it will improve post-secondary education by increasing the percentage of students who are attending post-secondary institutions.

Minister, we made a similar commitment in the government's Reaching Higher plan. Can you update this

House as to the progress that has been made since that commitment was made?

Hon. John Milloy: I very much appreciate the question, because members may not realize it but we're actually at about the fifth anniversary right now of the Reaching Higher plan, one of the most significant investments in post-secondary education in over two generations.

There have been many successes through Reaching Higher. The biggest one is the fact that we have welcomed an additional 120,000 students into our colleges and universities, and an additional 60,000 apprentices. Just to put it in context, 120,000 new students is the equivalent of creating a new University of Toronto and a new Ryerson University together. That is what has been added to the system.

At the same time, our post-secondary education rate of participation is now 62%, one of the highest in the world. As we move forward, however, we know that we have to do even better, with experts—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Minister, I'm happy to hear that increasing post-secondary attendance is a key goal of our government. However, in order to increase post-secondary attendance to 70%, it will require more resources. This is an important goal, but we are still addressing the effects of the global economic recession.

What is the government's plan to sustain this increase in enrolment, and how will we ensure that we maintain high standards at our post-secondary institutions?

Hon. John Milloy: As I was saying, 62% of Ontarians have some form of post-secondary educational credential right now. Our target is 70%, which is what most experts agree is what we need. I was very pleased that the speech from the throne committed us to welcoming an additional 20,000 new students to our colleges and universities this fall.

I'm pleased with the investments that we've made over the past number of years in terms of bricks and mortar, more support for students and more support for institutions. That's going to be an important platform to build on when we welcome another 20,000 this fall, through the commitment that we made in the speech from the throne, and details that will be made available in the coming weeks that we're looking forward to working with our colleges and universities and ensuring that we have one of the best post-secondary systems in the world.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is to the Acting Premier, I guess. Minister, as you may or may not be aware, there are some great concerns coming out of the Ministry of Natural Resources. Recently the MNR undertook a complete organizational restructuring, and before that, the MNR lost the forestry file. In fact, the new internal MNR structure no longer includes a fish and wildlife branch.

Anglers, hunters, trappers, outdoor groups and organizations are quite concerned about this. They see this as a continued erosion of the MNR away from its core responsibilities of fish and wildlife management. Minister, I must admit that I am just as concerned, as the ministry continues to lose the important traditional values that it has long identified with for the people in the province of Ontario.

Minister, can you and your government reassure the outdoors community that these major changes will not diminish the traditional fish and wildlife roles of the MNR?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm happy to have the opportunity to address the question. I know that the honourable member knows that, as a rural member and for other reasons, I am particularly interested in the operations of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

What I can say to the honourable member is that I am aware that there has been some administrative change in terms of the organization of the Ministry of Natural Resources. He has particularly identified the importance of the fish and wildlife branch, and I would agree with him that it is a very important function of government.

In terms of how the management of fish and wildlife resources is now ordered in the province with the Ministry of Natural Resources, I'm not particularly familiar with that. I am aware that the minister is certainly doing her very best to ensure that those functions of the ministry that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Acting Premier, here is what the executive director of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters had to say about the MNR structural changes:

"It is regrettable that the one branch anglers and hunters most identified with has been splintered. Obviously, we are concerned about the marginalization of fish and wildlife, and by extension, fishing and hunting, through the division of the fish and wildlife program."

Minister, because of the elimination of the fish and wildlife branch, there have also been concerns expressed relating to the accounting of the SPA, or the special purpose account, monies from fishing and hunting licence revenues being properly spent on fish and wildlife programs.

Will you and your government promise to uphold the MNR's traditional core functions of fish and wildlife management? Can you guarantee that the fish and wildlife SPA, special purpose account, revenues will be spent on fish and wildlife management, not on species at risk or your government's biodiversity agenda?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm happy to have the opportunity, on behalf of the minister, to stress today that the only thing that has changed at the ministry in terms of the services is the names of the branches that lead the work. In terms of the resources that are devoted and dedicated to protecting our natural resources, fish and wildlife particularly, they remain intact.

I'm surprised that the Federation of Anglers and Hunters perhaps wouldn't have that information. I'm delighted that you have provided the opportunity in the House today for me to make that clarification and also to state quite unequivocally that, as a government, we will continue to support the investments and the sound management of the fish and wildlife resources of the province of Ontario.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. A number of people in our constituency and across the north are concerned about the closure of the Xstrata smelter refinery in the city of Timmins. They have been writing you letters, and in those letters, they've been asking your government to intervene in some way in order to keep that facility open.

One of the suggestions is to follow the legislation that I put forward, which would make changes to section 91 of the act in order to ensure that we get value added to the resources that we extract from the ground. What's interesting is that in your response on page 2 of the letters that you've been sending back, you say, "It is important to note that no province in Canada has a law that dictates mandatory provincial processing." Minister, that's not true. The reality is, the province of Newfoundland has similar legislation to what I have put forward, and other provinces have varying measures in order to get to that particular point.

Are you prepared to clarify by rewriting letters to people to say that, in fact, those provisions do—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

1120

Hon. Michael Gravelle: In fact, I think the member does know that indeed no province has legislation which requires processing, and that does include Newfoundland and Labrador. We know that there are minerals coming from Voisey's Bay that are being processed in Ontario at the Xstrata Falconbridge smelter. That is just a fact, and he does know that. We also know that a significant amount—in fact, three quarters—of the iron ore that comes into our steel plants in Sault Ste. Marie and Hamilton comes from Labrador, Quebec, Minnesota and Michigan, I believe. So while there is, I think, a clause in their legislation that allows them to invoke that, there is no legislation that requires processing to be taking place in the province. I think the member understands that.

Let me just state once again that we are obviously incredibly concerned about the impact the Xstrata decision is having on the workers, and it's something that we want to continue to work closely with you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What I understand is that you're trying to confuse the issue. It's quite simple: Other provinces want to add value to those minerals, and have

different mechanisms in order to do so. The province of Newfoundland has what I'm proposing in section 91: an ability to say to companies such as Xstrata, "You will not shut down your refinery and you will refine and smelt those materials here."

For you to write a letter to constituents across northern Ontario to say that is not the fact, that no other province does that, is false. So I ask you again: Are you prepared to retract what you have said by way of follow-up letters to these people so that they clearly understand the facts for what they are and not what you're making up?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: "Making up"? He made it up. It's a fact.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just say, "I withdraw."

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I certainly understand very, very well, as does the Premier, what an incredibly difficult situation this is. The Premier met with Mick Davis, the global CEO of Xstrata, last week, and he asked some pretty tough questions. In fact, we made it clear that we would like nothing better than to have Xstrata change their mind on this decision.

But in terms of the situation in Newfoundland and Labrador, the fact is, it's a misconception that all materials from Voisey's Bay have to be processed in Newfoundland, when we know that various parts are being shipped to Ontario for processing. We cannot close our borders without having a massive impact potentially on thousands of other workers in Ontario.

As I pointed out, in Newfoundland they do have a clause that they can choose to invoke, but they don't invoke the clause in the case of iron ore—I mean, in the case of other minerals.

We're going to continue to work with you. I was in Timmins last week, as you know, and we were able to make an announcement—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, this past fall, Bill 177, the Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act, passed third reading, and it recently received royal assent. My understanding of the bill is that it sets out to clarify the roles of school boards and trustees, because those roles were not well defined when significant structural changes in our educational system took place over a decade ago.

Further to discussions I've had with the two Peel region school boards representing my area, they seek assurances. We all know that much has changed in the

last decade in our public education system, and it is important that board governance also sees positive change. Minister, could you tell the House what will be the next steps of implementing Bill 177?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, I'm happy to have the opportunity to address the question. I'm sure that members in this assembly are hearing from their local school board trustees with questions that have arisen around how this bill is going to be implemented and what the next steps are.

First of all, with respect to Bill 177, we brought these changes into place, and we did have a great deal of consultation before the bill was passed into law. We have engaged the school community significantly, but there still remain questions. I want the people of Ontario to know that ministry officials are currently working on a number of next steps.

We have recently consulted with a provincial-interest regulation to create a framework within the ministry that will be able to intervene—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Minister, I understand that there is a provincial-interest regulation as part of Bill 177. I've heard that there are some concerns that the provincial-interest regulation will allow you to intervene at the board level solely on the basis of EQAO results.

We all expect boards to be managed with the utmost integrity. Moreover, we depend on them to put the best interests of their students first.

Minister, can you tell the House, will the government be able to intervene at the board level solely on the basis of test scores? How will it affect accountability? How does it support struggling boards? What is involved, Minister, in the public-interest regulation?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: With respect to the regulation, we are highly sensitive to a range of issues that can impact student achievement. But it is a notice to boards that student achievement is something that we are paying very close attention to. Our government has made it clear that student success is a priority. We want to improve student test scores. We want to increase graduation rates. We want to continue to build confidence in the public education system.

I can say that, with respect to the provincial-interest regulation, test scores will be one part of the consideration but not the only part of the consideration that we make when we consider what we might do and what tools we might implement to assist and support school boards as they look to improve student success in their boards.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, I've heard from a personal support worker in my riding who was told that the local community care access centre ran out of money in February and has not accepted any new clients, and

will not accept any new clients until the new fiscal begins. Why are these workers being told that taking on new clients who need care simply isn't in the budget?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I tell you, the work that is done in the community by our community care access centres is tremendous work. We have made excellent progress. We've increased funding dramatically for CCACs. We know that providing supports for people in their own homes is what we need to do. We need to continue to support CCACs. As I say, we've seen tremendous increases in their funding, and we will continue to increase support for CCACs.

The member opposite represents a party who has a policy of freezing health care spending. Freezing health care spending will have a devastating effect on our community care access centres. We remain committed to improving health care in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The minister's words are not matching her actions. The CCAC workers have been told that no new clients can start until the new fiscal. These personal support workers have clients that need oxygen care, personal care, lift and wheelchair assistance, catheter care and much more. Without these workers, patients who are leaving hospitals will still suffer.

You know that providing post-hospital care for patients reduces the need for return trips to emergency rooms, meaning it is a preventive and cost-effective measure. Minister, where do you expect these patients to go?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think our record speaks for itself when it comes to supporting community care access centres. In this fiscal year, almost \$2 billion has been spent in community care access centres; that's an increase in funding of 56% since we took office.

Clearly, under the party opposite—they, in fact, cut home and community health care funding by \$22 million and decreased nursing visits by 22%. The cuts in that sector were pretty profound under the Tory government. In stark contrast, we have 220,000 more people receiving home care now than in 2003.

Is there more work to be done? Absolutely. Are we committed to improving supports for people in their own homes? Absolutely. It's part of our plan to reduce wait times in emergency rooms, to decrease the levels of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Acting Premier. A year ago, AbitibiBowater asked the McGuinty Liberals to allow that company to sell off their power dams in northwestern and northeastern Ontario. New Democrats oppose any sell-off.

While other paper mills have closed because they cannot afford to pay the McGuinty government's inflated industrial hydro bills, Abitibi's power dams generate electricity at very low cost, which has helped sustain

three paper mills in Thunder Bay, in Fort Frances and Iroquois Falls, and over 2,000 jobs. AbitibiBowater is now at it again trying to sell those power dams.

My question is this: Are the McGuinty Liberals going to allow AbitibiBowater to sell off those power dams and put thousands of jobs at risk in Thunder Bay, Fort Frances and Iroquois Falls?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

1130

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the question from the member. I know he has been involved in these kinds of issues for a long time.

This government is investing big-time, through our agency partners, in expanding our grid to ensure that we can gain access to a lot of the huge economic development opportunities in the north, in particular in the energy sector.

We're very committed to moving forward on projects in the north with regard to water hydro projects. We recognize it is one of the most economical ways to provide energy supply. When we work through these transmission expansions, we know it's going to open doors for communities in the north, opportunities and jobs in the north, as we expand these hydro projects. Certainly, we will be keeping an eye on the issue the member is raising as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The supplementary question should be: Do you know where Iroquois Falls and Fort Frances are? Because the reality is, if you allow them to sell off those power dams, the cost of production will go up by \$50 to \$75 a tonne and that means the mill in Iroquois Falls, the mill in Fort Frances and the mill in Thunder Bay will be at risk of closure.

Our question is a very simple one: Are you going to block the sale of those dams? Because if you don't, they will not be able to compete with your hydro rates and those people will lose their jobs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Again, I thank the member for the question. I say again that we're very committed to ensuring that all kinds of energy supply opportunities are opened up to the north that currently don't exist. We're in the process now of the single largest transmission expansion in the history of this province. That is going to open up doors to the north and in some cases even the Far North when it comes to hydro opportunities.

I'll certainly keep my eye on the issues that the member is raising. I'm pleased to do that. I appreciate the member raising that issue in this Legislature. We'll certainly be keeping our eye on it.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Early today, we heard an allegation that the report from the provincial facilitator on the Barrie-Innisfil boundaries contained one recommendation but that the legislation introduced contained

much more land. There seems to be a discrepancy or misunderstanding. Can you please clarify for the Legislature how much land the facilitator recommended to be added to Barrie and how much land the legislation added to the city of Barrie boundary?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I don't want to get anybody in NDP research in trouble. I think what has happened is, the NDP has made a mistake. They have mixed up hectares and acres: 2,200 hectares equals 5,600 acres. So what appears to have happened is that the NDP has mixed up acres and hectares, because to my total, 2,200 hectares equals 5,600 acres, and that is exactly what the facilitator recommended.

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: He has it. They have it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Wellington-Halton Hills has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Finance concerning the transfer of staff from the Ontario Ministry of Revenue to the Canada Revenue Agency. This matter will be debated on Tuesday, March 23 at 6 p.m.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1300.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Margaret R. Best: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the Black History Month statement I made on February 17, 2010, my remark "including the late Leonard A. Braithwaite" should be read as "including Leonard A. Braithwaite." I would point out that Mr. Braithwaite is in fact alive and well and is in the east members' gallery today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. That is a point of order.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Paul Miller: Today, I'd like to introduce a special guest, Alice Hazelton, who is in the members' gallery. Alice has worked for several years in the British Parliament. She's here to learn about our parliamentary system, and we're very happy to have her here.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence as I introduce a number of guests here today. These are women who supported the war effort for World War II in the Lakeview small arms complex, and they're here with us today. Please join me in welcoming and celebrating—now, Olga Cutmore and Irene Baker are not here, but we do have Olive Purdy, Bernice Gowe, Violet Driscoll, Alma McCrindel, Kay Walder, Irene Baker and

Mary Hansen. Joining them are Eileen and Marilyn Stanley on behalf of their mother, Anne Benden Stanley, as well as Donna Carr, Sharon Sbrocchi, Leon Sbrocchi, Megan Sbrocchi, Richard Rylko, Susie Rylko, Lynn Judge and Marlene Briand; as well, Jim Tovey, Mississauga's man of the year and the founder of the Lakeview Foundation, and his wife, Lee Tovey. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Cambridge and page Quinton Lowe, I'd like to welcome his aunt Brenda Lowe to the galleries today.

I'd like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery two co-op students from St. Joseph's College: Samantha Reilly, who is working with the human resources branch, and Victoria Mendolia, who's working in my office. Thank you very much, and welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Hillier: Calls continue to come into my constituency office from people who have seen steep increases in their hydro bills since the installation of their smart meters. I'll share just a couple of examples that came to my attention recently.

Miss Bowes of Carleton Place had a monthly hydro bill averaging \$120, until their smart meter was installed. Now her monthly bill is \$317, although her usage has not changed.

Another family in Perth saw their bill go from \$160 per month before the smart meter to \$374 after the installation. Interestingly, she heats her house with oil, heats her water with propane, and her dryer is also propane.

I'm left to wonder: How is it that although people's usage has not changed, their hydro bills are doubling and tripling? The answer is simple: In this case, "smart" is a pejorative term as used by the Liberals, as in, "We are smarter than you, so pay up more."

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: This past Monday, we celebrated International Women's Day. The South London Community Centre held a special event to commemorate this auspicious day that included dancing, food and music from many different cultures and backgrounds. More importantly, this event also provided the opportunity for women to engage in a cross-cultural dialogue and conversation. The South London Community Centre holds this event every year in order to facilitate such an atmosphere and also cultivate lifelong friendship between women.

International Women's Day is meant to raise awareness about the plight, success and strength of women all over the world. It is also about fighting the discrimination

and sexism that women everywhere face on a daily basis. It is a day of solidarity and support for one half of the world's population.

It is the efforts of organizations such as the South London Community Centre that represent the spirit of International Women's Day. I commend them on their efforts and I wish them success in their future endeavours.

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Just over a year ago, my riding of Oxford suffered a tragic loss with the passing of the Hawkins family: Richard, Laurie, Cassandra and Jordan. They were killed in their home by carbon monoxide poisoning due to a blocked fireplace vent. This deadly gas is odourless, tasteless and colourless, so the only way to ensure people are warned is to have a carbon monoxide detector.

To try and avoid more tragedies like this in our province, I introduced a private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act, which would require functioning carbon monoxide detectors in every home in Ontario. Last April, the bill passed second reading unanimously, but then it got stuck in committee. The government refused to bring it forward. Sadly, Dalton McGuinty put public relations above the need to protect Ontarians. When he prorogued the Legislature last week, the Hawkins Gignac Act died on the order paper.

Today, I had the privilege of meeting with Laurie's uncle John Gignac, who has created the "end the silence" foundation to educate people on the importance of having a functioning carbon monoxide detector in their home. I want to commend him for his work to get this important message out. He had a message for me: Don't give up on making it a law that every house in Ontario is protected by a carbon monoxide detector.

I'm pleased to commit to the Legislature, the people of Oxford and the Hawkins and Gignac families that I will reintroduce the Hawkins Gignac Act. I will keep spreading the message that carbon monoxide detectors save lives and encouraging people to protect their families by installing one today.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: This Sunday, March 14, marks one year since the Nanticoke Steelworkers Local 8782 began to lose their livelihoods. Through to last August, nearly 1,000 US Steel employees were locked out. The ripple effect of those job losses is about 6,000 jobs lost across all sectors: hospitality, health, retail, transportation and others.

While these workers were locked out, Canadian raw materials were being taken out of our country and processed at US Steel plants south of the border. That's right: Our jobs were taken out of Ontario across the border, keeping workers there on the job while our workers' kids missed out on sports activities, food and clothing that their families could no longer afford.

The first fatal mistake was made back in August 2007 when US Steel was permitted to buy Stelco Canada. Stelco was a company with a long and proud history of Canadian ownership and management that the union made better with each round of negotiations.

US Steel is locking out good, long-term workers and thumbing its nose at the Canadian government, which has taken the company to court to force them to live up to their commitments under the Investment Canada Act.

That loss of jobs is difficult enough in a plant that is widely considered to be one of the best and most productive in North America, but that US Steel takes our raw materials and the related jobs from our country to ensure that fellow steelworkers in another country remain on the job is deliberately divisive.

I call on our federal colleagues to move quickly to get the court action completed to force this foreign owner to honour its legal commitment under Canadian legislation. I call on both the federal and the provincial governments to keep our raw materials in Ontario for processing.

I invite all MPPs to take part in a protest on March 14 from 1 to 3.

WORLD KIDNEY DAY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Today, March 11, marks the fifth annual World Kidney Day. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the month of March as Kidney Health Month in Canada.

Over 16,000 Ontarians struggle with end-stage kidney disease. These Ontarians often require dialysis therapy either in a hospital, independent clinic or at home, while others require a kidney transplant. These are all critical life-sustaining treatments but are not cures.

1310

World Kidney Day is a global reminder for all of us to pay attention to an organ that is too often overlooked. On this World Kidney Day, I wish to acknowledge the leadership of the Kidney Foundation of Canada and other partners in kidney care, including Mississauga's Baxter Canada. They have all played a leadership role in promoting kidney health and educating Ontarians on how to effectively manage chronic kidney disease.

On this World Kidney Day, I encourage all members of this House to raise awareness about the importance of our kidney health in our communities.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: It's a concerning day. Having had the honour and privilege to serve as the Minister of Natural Resources, the very foundation that founded the MNR is being questioned. To many people across the great province, to northerners, rural Ontarians, anglers, hunters and trappers, when you'd say you worked for the ministry, they thought you worked in the Ministry of Natural Resources.

We are troubled by the Deputy Premier's response to my question about the elimination of the MNR's fish and

wildlife branch and the lack of awareness and concern from the McGuinty government. I'm also concerned with the MNR's changes and the impact it will have on hunting and fishing licence revenues going to the special purpose account and that the Deputy Premier failed to address that.

Also, there has been a lack of clarification from the McGuinty government over the effect of the new HST on hunting and fishing licences. We are still awaiting word on whether the price of hunting and fishing licences will go up by the value of the HST or not. Fishermen and hunters need to know, if this is indeed the case, that this extra revenue will go into the special purpose account to directly benefit the fish and wildlife programs and not simply be another tax grab.

The anglers, hunters and trappers of this province share a genuine passion for their traditional way of life and their commitment to conservation. As I look forward to meeting with, next week, the outdoor community, I am hopeful that this government will refocus its attention on these important aspects and retain core Ministry of Natural Resources functions and responsibilities.

PARLEMENT JEUNESSE FRANCOPHONE DE L'ONTARIO

M. Phil McNeely: Cette semaine, Queen's Park accueille la quatrième édition annuelle du Parlement jeunesse francophone de l'Ontario, PJFO. Chaque année, cet événement attire des élèves francophones des 11^e et 12^e années de partout en l'Ontario pour participer à une simulation parlementaire. Cette année, 60 étudiants s'y sont inscrits, dont trois de ma circonscription. Je suis fier de reconnaître Elisyan Rousseau-Beauchamp, Diego Elizondo et Loudjina Alexandre d'Ottawa-Orléans.

Hier, les étudiants ont eu l'occasion de rencontrer la ministre de l'Éducation, Leona Dombrowsky, et d'autres députés afin d'apprendre le processus parlementaire. Ils ont passé la journée hier—et ils vont le continuer aujourd'hui—à approfondir leur connaissance de notre démocratie parlementaire dans la Chambre.

Je crois qu'il est très important pour les jeunes de cultiver un esprit civique et de leur permettre de développer une appréciation de nos institutions démocratiques. Chaque décision prise par un politicien a un effet sur les membres de notre société. Nous devrions tous désirer devenir des citoyens plus informés. Ceci est précisément l'objectif du PJFO.

Je félicite le député Jean-Marc Lalonde, Gilles Morin, Melissa et Christine pour leur bon ouvrage.

WOMEN OF LAKEVIEW

Mr. Charles Sousa: In commemoration of International Women's Week, I am pleased to recognize the historic contribution by the women of Lakeview village in south Mississauga.

At the beginning of World War II, a major munitions complex was built in Lakeview to support our Canadian

troops. While the men were bravely fighting overseas, 40,000 women stepped up and became the primary force behind Canada's small arms munitions factory in Lakeview. They worked as welders, tool and die makers, riveters and carpenters. These outstanding women manufactured munitions and arms that helped the Allied forces win the war. Many became exceptionally skilled and retained high-value jobs after the war, helping to advance women's rights. Not only did their dedication and hard work support the war effort but their leadership still serves as an inspiration to both men and women today.

The Lakeview community is rich with history and is proud of the important role it played in Canada's heritage. Lakeview was home to Canada's first airport and aviation school, founded in 1915 to train Canadian pilots during World War I. Lakeview also powered our province's economic growth by hosting the largest coal-fired power plant in North America for over 50 years. The community celebrated the closure of that facility and our government's commitment to protect this precious waterfront for future generations.

The people of Lakeview have put forward an exciting plan to revitalize our waterfront. As part of that vision, the Lakeview Legacy Community Foundation has worked to preserve the memory and significance of the small-arms factory, which is now designated as a heritage building. The foundation seeks to convert the complex into a centre for the arts, culture, science and heritage in memory of the wartime effort by these outstanding women.

Mr. Speaker and fellow members of the Legislative Assembly, please join me in expressing our thanks to the people of Lakeview, and in particular our deepest appreciation and gratitude to the exceptional women of Lakeview for their tremendous contributions to our province and our country. Welcome, and thank you for your service to our country.

KEN EINBODEN

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It is with a heavy heart that I rise today to express, on behalf of my colleagues in this Legislature and on behalf of my community of York South-Weston, our very deep shock and sadness, and to grieve with the Einboden family for the loss of a father and his young daughter, but also to honour a father who acted as only a loving father would.

Ken Einboden, his 12-year-old daughter Britney and her baby sister, four-month-old Kendra, were all at home last Sunday, March 7, 2010, when at approximately 2:45 p.m., their house was engulfed in flames within minutes. Neighbours on Kemp Square, a quiet cul-de-sac in the Jane and Lawrence area, witnessed Mr. Einboden running out of the house holding four-month-old Kendra. He quickly handed her to a neighbour and ran back to save his daughter Britney.

Father and daughter were found by firefighters in the house when they arrived, and they were rushed to hospital. Ken Einboden and his daughter Britney, a grade 7 student at Amesbury public school, both lost their lives

in this tragic fire. Our deepest condolences go out to Jackie Einboden and the entire Einboden family.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): As members are aware, I erred last week in that this is actually the last week for our pages. I would just ask all members to join me as we say thank you to the pages for the great work they have done with us. Thank you, and good luck to all of you.

Applause.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NUTRITION MONTH

Hon. Margaret R. Best: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to mark March as Nutrition Month in Canada. Nutrition Month reinforces the importance of healthy eating and the fundamental role healthy foods play in good health. This month provides us with the opportunity to spotlight healthy food and nutrition and to encourage Ontarians to make healthy food choices, be more active, and improve our overall health and mental well-being.

The Dietitians of Canada have led the national Nutrition Month campaign for 30 years. This year's theme for national Nutrition Month is "From Field to Table," which is aligned with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and its very successful Foodland Ontario campaigns. Both serve to support local Ontario farmers and food producers, who strengthen our economy and provide nutritious seasonal offerings grown in Ontario.

1320

We want to increase awareness of the fact that eating healthy foods and making healthier food choices such as eating less prepackaged or fast-food meals, reducing salt intake and eating more fruits and vegetables can reduce the incidence of obesity as well as prevent strokes and diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer.

My ministry is helping Ontarians make informed decisions about their most important asset: their health. Ontarians need access to credible information and advice on the benefits of healthy eating and how making small changes can have a significant impact on their overall health.

To support Ontarians in all regions, the Ministry of Health Promotion joined forces with the Dietitians of Canada to create EatRight Ontario. Launched in 2007, EatRight Ontario is a free government service that provides access to nutrition information from registered dietitians through both a telephone and a Web-based service. The telephone service has the capacity to help

callers in more than 110 languages, serving the multi-cultural communities that call our great province of Ontario their home. The people of Ontario are taking the time to call and to e-mail the registered dietitians at EatRight Ontario. EatRight Ontario also provides a menu planner, an interactive online tool that helps individuals prepare nutritious meals and snacks, achieve and maintain healthy weights, and eat the daily recommended servings of food groups as recommended by "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide."

To further encourage healthy eating and the development of good eating habits in our youngest Ontarians, the Ministry of Health Promotion's new after-school initiative is reaching more children in high-priority neighbourhoods. With this new \$10-million initiative, children and youth have access to healthy after-school snacks as well as nutrition education and other health-related programs in a variety of community settings such as schools and community and recreation centres.

Healthy eating is also a key element in the healthy communities fund. Through this fund, the minister provides funding to provincial and community organizations to plan and deliver health promotion initiatives that benefit the health of underserved Ontarians. This is yet another way in which we can encourage Ontarians in eating healthily.

Nutrition Month is a perfect time to get on the right track with healthy eating and active living. For more information, I encourage my colleagues in this House and all Ontarians to visit www.ontario.ca/eatright and to take the time to make nutritious, healthy food choices each and every day. Proper nutrition is an important investment in individual communities and the overall health of our great province. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, our health is our wealth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries? Responses?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to rise this afternoon to speak on behalf of the official opposition on the subject of March being Nutrition Month in Canada. This is something that does require our vital attention. I agree with the minister when she emphasizes the importance of this, both federally and provincially, because of the huge implications that the lack of a healthy lifestyle are having on our populations, both children and adults. It's vitally important, I agree, that we teach our children the importance of making healthy food choices and also embracing a healthy lifestyle, because the consequences of not doing that are huge.

I was shocked to find out recently from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario that obesity is the new tobacco. When you look at that in terms of the implications for our populations in terms of the chronic diseases that we are being faced with almost on an epidemic basis in Ontario, with diabetes, with heart disease, with strokes and with some kinds of cancer, it means that we really need to redouble our efforts to make sure all of our residents are educated about the need to make healthy food choices.

The good news is that there are a lot of great organizations that are already doing that. I would like to speak just briefly on a couple of organizations that I am aware of.

One is the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario. I know that they had a day—two days ago, I believe—when they came to Queen's Park and spoke to members about some of the great work they are doing, particularly a program called Spark that they recently started, which allows community organizations to come together and figure out how they can help people in either embracing a healthier, active lifestyle in terms of sports and active living, or in teaching people about foods and nutrition. You can apply online. I would encourage people to take a look at their website, where you can make an application for a community grant of up to \$25,000. It doesn't help you to buy the food or to buy any of the ingredients, but it does help you to put the organization together for those community groups in order to be able to help people in the community.

The other group that I'm aware of—I knew generally about the good work they were doing, but now I know a bit more specifically—is a group called Girls Inc., which has many chapters across the province of Ontario. They are engaged in teaching primarily young women who are expecting about prenatal nutrition and the importance of that, and postnatal nutrition up until their child is six months of age. Of course, it shouldn't be stopping there—that's what they're funded for—but they do an excellent job in teaching young women who may not have had the opportunity to learn how to cook nutritious, healthy food to do that, what to shop for, and they often have food for them to be able to take home. That certainly supplements what they are doing. They also give them prenatal vitamins.

What we're doing in my community—I just attended a meeting last night about this—is, we are trying to put together a program to help people who are in need in our community by supplementing some of their income with food choices, by offering community cooking opportunities, and also supplementing some of their diets by introducing some fresh fruits and vegetables. Girls Inc. is certainly a large part of that process. We also have a number of churches and service organizations that are involved with this. We hope to put something together that is going to help our communities.

I commend the minister for bringing this important issue forward and encourage everyone in our community to do whatever they can to encourage healthy nutrition.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I would just use the minute left: Of course, part of healthy living is also getting exercise. I would note that the minister was in Parry Sound-Muskoka just last week to open the Ontario Winter Games. I would like to commend the organizers of the Ontario Winter Games, Scott Aitchison, Mike Malone and the committee, who did an excellent job. I know the minister was there on a beautiful starlit night on Thurs-

day evening down at Muskoka wharf in Gravenhurst to get those games off to a big success.

Yes, eating properly is important; getting exercise is also important. We need to take initiatives to encourage people to get more exercise. I have many ideas, but only 17 seconds to get them out, so I will finish with that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to rise today in response to Minister Best's statement on March being Nutrition Month in Canada. I also am really proud to acknowledge and applaud the hard work of dietitians in every community across this province.

I want to take a minute to talk to you about Cynthia Payne. Cynthia is a registered dietitian and she as well as over 200 other people yesterday attended a community hearing organized by the Ontario Health Coalition. She came and talked to us about her program, the diabetes clinic at Northumberland Hills Hospital in Cobourg.

Well, she and the entire team at the diabetes clinic are being laid off. Their last day at work will be the end of April, in a few weeks from now—herself, the five other dietitians, the registered nurse, the entire team that works at the diabetes clinic at Northumberland Hills Hospital. The clinic is closing. Those people are being laid off.

She talked to us about the 2,000 people with diabetes whom she had seen just the previous year. She talked to us about the 187 in-patients she had seen at Northumberland Hills Hospital in Cobourg. But this program will be no more. It is being closed because the hospital needs to save the \$150,000 that it needs to invest in order to maintain this program. I, like everybody else in the room, was very saddened to hear about dietitian Cynthia Payne and the diabetes clinic.

1330

The Dietitians of Canada want Ontarians to be aware of our food choices. They want to empower Ontarians to make the best possible choices for their food, whether they be diabetics or people like you and I. This is certainly an agenda that I'm happy to stand up for and support.

But as I said before on other occasions during Health Awareness Month, let us take a moment and consider whether our actions right here in this Legislature meet the challenge in front of us. Nutrition, or lack thereof, is an issue that is reaching epidemic proportions. The numbers are clear. You look at the number of diabetics increasing into the millions. You look at the obesity crisis: 25% of our kids are obese or overweight. Cancer, hypertension—all of them are skyrocketing. Today our children may be the first generation to have a shorter lifespan than their parents, and it could all be prevented with nutrition and exercise.

Let us make no mistake: We face a health crisis of immense severity, and our actions must be fitting of this reality. But are we up to the task? Are we doing everything we can to ensure our children live long and healthy lives? Are we doing enough to support adults in achieving the same things? The sad answer is no. The programs that the Minister of Health Promotion speaks of are good,

but let's be honest: These programs alone are not doing enough to address the crisis that we are facing.

This minister has allowed the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act to die with prorogation. By not bringing it forward, it means that trans fats will continue to be in the prepared foods that we eat. Health experts call trans fats the new tobacco because of the terrific health effects it has on all of us. If the same bill had been supported by this minister, Ontarians would have simple nutritional tools by knowing the calories of the food they order. When you go to a fast-food place, if you know that a sandwich is 1,700 calories, people won't buy it. But we don't have this information unless you search forever. If you post it on the menu board, one person out of two uses it, and now it is a law in 25 states. Why are we falling further and further behind?

Another point that is crucial to good nutrition is breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is the first food. It is the first step you take toward health promotion. Yet, again, the breastfeeding strategy is just a dream in Ontario while other provinces are moving ahead. I have asked the ministry repeatedly, even our Premier, and there has been no movement forward. To this day, 91% of women want to breastfeed and only 20% of them succeed.

PETITIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: This petition comes from Cairine Wilson high school in Ottawa–Orléans. Katie Bunting, Sam O'Neill, Corey Valois and 16 others have signed this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 2007 report, concluded that without dramatic reductions in human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, climate change may bring 'abrupt and irreversible effects on oceans, glaciers, land, coastlines and species'; and

"Whereas no one group, country or continent is responsible for climate change, but where all human beings are collectively responsible for solving the problem; and

"Whereas the production of greenhouse gases in Canada has increased by 27% over 1990 levels; and

"Whereas our elected leaders have a responsibility to report to the public on their actions with respect to halting climate change for the sake of accountability; and

"Whereas youth in particular have a special interest in this issue, being those that will inherit this earth, our only home;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario swiftly pass Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change."

I agree with this petition, put my signature on it and send it up with Jordan.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here, and it's signed by a great number of my constituents in and around Tillsonburg. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under conditions.... ; and

"Whereas by October 2009, insured PET scans" are being "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine";

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: "to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Brady.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition here with an accompanying note that says that these petitions were signed by people in Barrie, Cambridge, Georgetown, Maple, Schomberg, Whitby, Mississauga, Bradford, Richmond Hill and Stouffville. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the growing number of unlawful firearms in motor vehicles is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers;

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned," therefore "strongly request and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2009, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving unlawful firearms in our communities."

Since I agree, I am delighted to sign my name to it.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have another petition here concerning the HST and the implementation of it. It's signed primarily by the people of the town of Ingersoll, and it is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes on Ontario families."

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: I have a petition from Cairine Wilson high school. Trevor Leslie, Brianna Champagne, Madison Stewart and 16 others signed it. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 2007 report, concluded that without dramatic reductions in human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, climate change may bring 'abrupt and irreversible effects on oceans, glaciers, land, coastlines and species'; and

"Whereas no one group, country or continent is responsible for climate change, but where all human beings are collectively responsible for solving the problem; and

1340

"Whereas the production of greenhouse gases in Canada has increased by 27% over 1990 levels; and

"Whereas our elected leaders have a responsibility to report to the public on their actions with respect to halting climate change for the sake of accountability; and

"Whereas youth in particular have a special interest in this issue, being those that will inherit this earth, our only home;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario swiftly pass Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change."

I will put my signature to this petition and send it up with Quinton.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with health care in Parry Sound-Muskoka, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has undertaken an operational audit to identify efficiencies and reduce costs; and

"Whereas we recognize that the status quo is not an option; and

"Whereas rehab services are of paramount concern to the residents of the region where income levels exclude them from accessing other alternatives; and

"Whereas the deficit recovery plan will not balance the budget;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health provide additional operational funding of 5% amounting to \$3.4 million to ensure the continuation of services as described in the deficit reduction plan submitted to the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN dated January 29, 2010."

I support this petition.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: I have a petition from St. Matthew Catholic High School in Ottawa-Orléans, and it's signed by Kassandra Kaszas, Rebecca Sanford, Lindsay Kary and 16 others.

"Whereas the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 2007 report, concluded that without dramatic reductions in human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, climate change may bring 'abrupt and irreversible effects on oceans, glaciers, land, coastlines and species'; and

"Whereas no one group, country or continent is responsible for climate change, but where all human beings are collectively responsible for solving the problem; and

"Whereas the production of greenhouse gases in Canada has increased by 27% over 1990 levels; and

"Whereas our elected leaders have a responsibility to report to the public on their actions with respect to halting climate change for the sake of accountability; and

"Whereas youth in particular have a special interest in this issue, being those that will inherit this earth, our only home;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario swiftly pass Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change."

I'll send this up with Nevan.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here, the content of which would be somewhat irrelevant as the proroguing of the House has taken place and all the private members' bills have died on the order paper. But I will present it on behalf of my constituents nonetheless.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic cultural heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

RAILROAD BRIDGE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a local petition here that is addressed to the Minister of Transportation, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Bloor Street West between Lansdowne Avenue and Dundas Street West has been identified as the only stretch of Bloor Street that has no landscaping;

"Whereas the neighbourhood near 1369 Bloor Street West has been recognized as a priority revitalization area by a city of Toronto study in 2000;

"Whereas items for beautification include:

"(1) Developing terraced walls with flowers and planters near the railroad bridge;

"(2) Constructing new abutment walls;

"(3) Cleaning, painting and reconstructing the rusty, dilapidated railroad bridge; and

"(4) Creating brightly lit murals underneath the bridge in order to make it more secure and more people-friendly;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request in the strongest terms that our city government immediately reactivate the 2000 reconstruction plan and CNR immediately

proceed with improvements to the bridge" and that the provincial government support this plan.

"We look forward to a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape. We want to be proud to live here."

Since I agree with this petition, I am delighted to sign my name to it as well.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MENINGITIS AWARENESS

DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR
DE LA SENSIBILISATION
À LA MÉNINGITE

Ms. Pendergast moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to proclaim April 24 in each year as Meningitis Awareness Day / Projet de loi 2, Loi proclamant le 24 avril de chaque année Jour de la sensibilisation à la méningite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure and honour and privilege today to rise and to speak about an act that proclaims April 24 Meningitis Awareness Day in Ontario.

The bill, Bill 2, looks at meningitis as a serious infection caused by inflammation of the lining around the brain and the spinal cord, and I will speak at length about the disease itself. As an overview, approximately 10% of those who contract the disease will die, and of those who survive, one in five will suffer permanent disabilities.

The Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada was established in 1998 to prevent death and disability from meningitis. April 24 of each year is World Meningitis Day. Today's act will proclaim April 24 as Meningitis Awareness Day in Ontario, and that will support the work of the Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada by heightening the awareness of meningitis, dedicating a day to sharing best practices, information and research, which are all crucial to ensure that no family loses a loved one to this terrible disease.

I have the distinct honour and privilege today of introducing to the House some guests. Kathryn Blain is here. She is the chair and founder of the Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada. She is accompanied by Dr. Ron Gold, who is the senior medical adviser for the Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada. We also have with us Karen Mayfield, the director of the Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada. And we're pleased and honoured to be joined by Mary Clough, who is the parent of MacKenzie—or Macey—whom we lost

to meningitis; and her daughter and Macey's sister, Cassandra Clough. We welcome them here today to the Legislature.

This is a difficult one today. I want to tell you two stories, but I need to tell them to you in a brief and succinct manner because my focus here today is on a Meningitis Awareness Day in Ontario and continuing to raise awareness among the people of Ontario of the consequences and effects of this terrible disease.

As a mother of three—this is always tough, to talk about losing youth to a terrible disease, but I would be remiss if I didn't take a minute and point out that Kathryn, the chair of the Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada, has a story to tell about her son, Michael Longo. You can find the story online, and I'll refer it to you, but I just wanted to give you an overview.

Kathryn calls her story "Out of the Blue." First of all, she says that: "In the beginning, meningitis can be so easily overlooked." On a Thursday, her son Michael mentioned that his back was hurting. She explains that they didn't think much of it because he'd been helping with the garden cleanup the day before. On Friday, he was feeling a little bit off, not sick enough to stay home. She says in her testimonial, "Saturday morning, the tidal wave struck." We lost Michael to meningococcal septicemia that Monday. I would refer you to meningitis.ca to read the story and the testimonials on that site.

Michael was at high school while I was still a vice-principal in Waterloo. My brother John taught Michael. Anyone in the community can tell you about Michael and what a vibrant, wonderful young man Michael was. Of course, Michael's memory today continues to push us on.

My brother John tells us that Michael was just that kind of personality; he was so vibrant and exciting. He wanted to learn, and he was a leader. John says, "I didn't teach Michael; Michael taught me." He taught him video streaming. He would run assemblies for the teachers. So I truly encourage you to go on and read Michael's story.

1350

I want to quote Kathryn. I know my time is limited, but I want to leave you with her thought at the end of my comments. She says:

"They say a light burns brighter just before it burns out. Perhaps the light in Michael's life burned brighter because at some level, somewhere, somehow, he knew that it would not burn for as long as we all wanted. May 9, 1995, is a day that our family will never forget. Please do not let this happen to your child. Immunize and protect your loved ones. There is no getting over the loss of a child. It's a wound that never completely heals."

I also want to tell you MacKenzie's story. Perhaps what I will do is intersperse it with what the Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada is and talk about a mother's grief. The two mothers who are here today with us are here to share that grief in the hopes that we can continue to raise awareness of this terrible disease and to look at prevention, obviously, as the key for all of us but, specifically, our children and youth.

The Meningitis Research Foundation began with a mother's grief over the loss of her son to meningitis, as

we just heard. During those sleepless nights and days, Michael's mother, Kathryn, who is here with us today, knew that her son had meningitis, but was shocked that there was so little information available. She walked away from the hospital after Michael's death and wanted to know why Michael had died, why so much medical attention could do so little, why meningitis could not be stopped, how it could be prevented—and she could find no answers.

She says, "I felt there was no support, no one to give me the help and information I wanted and needed. I had to go through this process by myself."

In announcing Michael's death, Kathryn had requested donations for meningitis research instead of flowers. What she discovered was that there was nowhere to direct these funds. So she put them in trust, believing that one day there would be somewhere for these funds to be directed.

Two years later, there was an outbreak of meningitis in our community in Kitchener-Waterloo where Michael had gone to school, so the reporters called Kathryn. She realized that the time was then, that the infrastructure needed to be put in place to create awareness and have a place for this to occur. So that was where the Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada was born.

She says she met the most wonderful and generous people who had experience with meningitis. One gentleman had lost his daughter, and he had been continuing to raise funds, directing them at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. Another gentleman lost his son just the week before Michael died.

Many people saw the need to raise awareness and have a national organization, so an executive core began and, in Kathryn's kitchen, the Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada was formed.

Michael Redfearn taught Michael how to produce these videos at the high school, and he created a wonderful video for Michael's service.

Dr. Ronald Gold, who is here with us today, had just retired from the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto as chief of infectious diseases, and he immediately became involved. He had also directed successful field trials of the meningococcal vaccine at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.

This was the founding core of the organization. The Meningitis Research Foundation became an advocate for research, vaccination, a source of information, donations and funding and a place for people to go who are experiencing the same thing.

Through education, this group—so important and important to us here today in Ontario—sets the stage to provide support and education to patients and their families affected by meningitis. They strive to increase public awareness of meningitis and promote a better understanding of the disease among health care professionals.

They'll provide funds for research for improved diagnosis, treatment and prevention of meningitis. Currently, they're providing funds to the second fellow in

vaccinology at the Vaccine Evaluation Centre in Vancouver, BC, under the supervision of Dr. David Scheifele. The first fellow has become a faculty member at the department of pediatrics at the University of British Columbia. They are also providing funds for Dalhousie University in Halifax—Dr. Scott Halperin.

I do want to go back to MacKenzie's story. I'm running out of time. Very quickly, I wanted to tell you all about meningitis, but again, I would refer you to the website, meningitis.ca. MacKenzie Clough—the testimonial from her mother and sister, who join us here today in the gallery. The testimonial states:

"February 26, 2005, is the day that our lives changed forever. That's the day my husband and I lost our eldest daughter and our daughter Cassandra lost her older sister and her best friend to a devastating disease called bacterial meningitis.

"Macey, as we called her, called home early in the morning on February 25 and asked if we could pick her up from school because she wasn't feeling well enough to drive herself home." And so begins Macey's story. You can find that online as well.

In her testimonial, Macey's mom says, "We didn't know what meningitis was or that there was a vaccine that could have prevented our daughter's death. Since our Macey died, I have become a mom on a mission trying to do what I can to help raise awareness about this horrible disease with the help of the Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada. I do not want to see another family experience what we are going through. You never get over losing a child."

I wanted to very briefly touch on some of the great steps that this government has taken down this road, on this path, and is continuing to today with Bill 2. In 2005, the McGuinty government made an announcement protecting young people against this deadly disease, so that more than 180,000 young people have been vaccinated against meningococcal meningitis, thanks to the McGuinty government. Ontario is a leader in this area.

In 2006, we continued to protect children in health care and vaccinations, and beginning last September, parents are now able to choose to vaccinate their children against the strains of invasive meningococcal disease.

I'm running out of time. I'll follow up in my two-minute response, but I did want to thank our guests today for sharing their very personal stories to raise awareness of meningitis in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to be able to speak to the motion that's been put forward by the member from Kitchener-Conestoga regarding the proclamation of April 24 as Meningitis Awareness Day in the province of Ontario. I thank her for bringing forward this motion in order that we can increase the awareness of this dreaded disease in our province and the impact that it has on young people.

I also have had the opportunity to learn first-hand about the devastating impact of this disease, because I do

know Kathryn Blain personally. I know that within our community, and certainly within our province and our country, Kathryn has, I would say to you, worked tirelessly in order to ensure that Michael's death was not in vain, but that other people would become aware of meningitis, how suddenly it can strike our young people, the need to be aware of it, and also the need to ensure that we provide our children with the vaccines in order that we can prevent meningitis from occurring in our population.

I want to pay tribute to Kathryn. Every time I see her, I am reminded of a mother who lost a son and who has done everything she possibly could in order to make sure that no other mother or father or sister or brother needs to suffer as she did. So I say, thank you.

I also want to thank MacKenzie's family. I know that you have a similar story to share with us. I appreciate your coming forward. I know it's always difficult to relive something, but we also extend our sympathy to you and we appreciate that you're here.

1400

We as legislators in this House have to do what is best for people, and so your coming forward and being here on a day such as today, when Leeanna has brought this motion forward, I will tell you, has a huge impact on us. It allows us to make sure we do what we can today by supporting the motion from the member for Kitchener-Conestoga and making sure that we do raise awareness.

I think Leeanna has done an outstanding job of telling us about the history, certainly of the foundation, and how Kathryn initially discovered there was no support out there, nobody to go to, to get answers about what had happened.

I just want to spend a few minutes talking about meningitis. Meningitis is a medical emergency. I don't know that people understand that. If it is not recognized and is left untreated, we've heard it can be fatal. Even those people who do survive can have some very severe consequences, including varying degrees of blindness, deafness, paralysis and mental retardation. If any parent or anyone suspects there is a case of meningitis, obviously you need to get to a hospital or get to the doctor as quickly as you can. Basically, it's an inflammation of the lining around the brain and the spinal cord. Different germs can cause it, usually bacteria or viruses and sometimes fungi.

Let's talk about how it spreads—and it does spread. It spreads through close contact, like a cold or the flu. Coughing, sneezing, sharing eating utensils, kissing and close physical contact can spread the germs from person to person. People can be carrying the germs that cause meningitis without realizing it. Because it is difficult, if not impossible, to stop the transmission of germs, especially among children, the key really does become prevention. Prevention is absolutely key, and that's why this motion to raise awareness is so important. Of course, the only people who can properly diagnose it are medical professionals.

We really need to take into consideration the fact that we have taken great strides. We have introduced vaccines

that will help to protect and prevent the disease from occurring in our young people. However, we need to keep current and we need to make sure that the new vaccines now available on the market are provided for our population, because the goal obviously is that we do everything we possibly can in order to end this disease. I guess that is the goal: to see an end to meningitis.

So today, although we in this House can't prevent it, we can raise the awareness of everybody in this province. Hopefully, by passing this today and setting aside April 24, we can make sure that people do what they can to share best practices, information and research. Ultimately, the goal, as Leeanna has said in her motion, is to make sure that no family loses a loved one to this disease.

We will be supporting this motion, and again I say thank you to you, Kathryn, and certainly to MacKenzie's family, and to Dr. Gold for the work you have done; you've had a huge impact. I know you serve on the international body as well.

I think that's important. These people here, through their dedication and determination to end this disease, have become involved at the global level and not just within the province of Ontario. We thank you for raising awareness on behalf of all people in the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to rise today to talk about Bill 2, An Act to proclaim April 24 in each year as Meningitis Awareness Day.

I, too, want to congratulate Leeanna, the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, for bringing this forward, and I thank all of our guests who are here today for their hard work in bringing this issue forward.

We won't repeat it enough times: Meningitis is a serious infection caused by inflammation of the lining around the brain and the spinal cord. It kills and it maims children, young people and adults the world over. We've been told that 10% of the individuals who contract meningitis will die. Of the ones who survive, 20% of them will be permanently disabled, often through neurological damage, including hearing loss.

In my previous life, I was a physiotherapist. I have had the opportunity to see first-hand too many young people come to the hospital because they had contracted meningitis. I followed some of them through the intensive rehab unit because of the extent of their neurological damage. I saw real troupers trying to put the pieces of their lives back together—learning to walk, learning to use their arms, learning to talk again.

There was one little boy that I had seen at the intensive rehab unit after he had contracted meningitis, and when I transferred to the children's treatment centre, I happened to see him again. To this day, he's still seriously disabled because he contracted meningitis as a kid. He's doing good. He has learned to cope with his disability, and he's happy-go-lucky, but life could have been a lot easier on him and on his family had prevention been there for him.

The Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada was established in 1998 to prevent death and disability from meningitis and other infections of the central nervous system, and I commend them for the good work that they do. People know more about meningitis than they did before, and this is because of their good work.

I want to talk a little bit about the symptoms of the disease: a sudden high fever; drowsiness and confusion; severe and unrelenting headaches, and they will say how terrible their headaches are; a stiff neck, which is something that doesn't happen in very many diseases; intolerance to bright lights or to sounds; there is often nausea and vomiting, they are feeling so terrible; sometimes you will see twitching, convulsions, delirium, especially if they're children; and there is sometimes a rash like little purple or red spots all over the body if it is meningococcal meningitis. If you see somebody with any of these symptoms, rush them to the closest emergency room. Every minute will count if you want to improve the outcome.

If your child is under 12 months of age, it becomes a little bit harder because they're non-verbal and they cannot tell you that their head hurts. It's hard to tell that they have a stiff neck and all the rest of it, but you can tell that your baby has a high fever. They will become kind of fretful and irritable, and whenever you try to handle them, they will fret lots, basically because they're feeling so terrible. You will also have difficulty waking them; they'll seem drowsy, and they won't want to eat. The same as with everybody else with meningitis, there's a chance they're going to start vomiting. If you're very observant, you'll sometimes see a little bit of a bulge on the top of their head—the fontanelle—and a stiff neck. If your baby is showing any of those symptoms, rush to the emergency room as fast as you can.

1410

I was just in Niagara on Tuesday, and I can't help but talk about the people in Fort Erie and Port Colborne who have lost their emergency room; and talk about the people in Wallace and Colborne and Winchester and Picton and St. Joe's and all through small, rural northern Ontario communities that are losing their emergency rooms. For all of those people, it will make access to those life-saving services a whole lot tougher.

But if you see those symptoms in any of you—it doesn't have to be children; it happens in adults and young adults; it happens to anybody—rush to the nearest emergency room as fast as you can, no matter where it is located.

I'm always a big champion of prevention. Health promotion, to me, is the way of the future. Prevention is also important when we talk about meningitis.

The number one prevention is vaccine. There are different vaccines out there to protect us from the main cause of meningitis. Not every vaccine does the same thing, and not every vaccine protects us the same way. I would encourage you to talk to your primary care provider—whether it's a nurse practitioner or a physician, or whoever happens to be your primary care provider—about getting the vaccine against meningitis.

Another key element of prevention is good health. A healthy immune system will protect most of us, most of the time. Although we can carry some of the germs that cause meningitis, they won't affect us; they won't make us ill. But people with compromised immune systems, whether through HIV, cancer treatment, organ transplants or other kinds of infection, are more susceptible.

There's also due diligence that you can do: Seek primary care attention, medical or otherwise, as soon as symptoms appear, and share with everybody your knowledge as to what kind of symptoms should send you rushing to the emergency room.

I would say to every parent and every new parent: Make sure you find out about how to tell if your infant or your child is showing signs of meningitis. You could save his or her life.

We should be particularly aware of symptoms in infants and young children, because with them, the symptoms often show mildly at first, and then they escalate in a matter of hours. You will see the little one who is just fine and a bundle of energy at lunchtime, and by supertime they are completely flat out.

Look for the other symptoms. Look for the big headache; look for the stiff neck. If you see any of them and you don't have transportation, dial 911 if it's available in your area. Otherwise, rush to the hospital as fast as you can.

There are many different organisms that give us meningitis. Viral meningitis is the most common. Thankfully, it tends to be a little less serious and is rarely life-threatening, but it is still a very serious disease. Viral meningitis infection occurs most often in the summer and fall, and there are no preventions for viral meningitis that we know of at this time. Thankfully, people usually recover in five to 10 days. There are new antiviral treatments that are being tried, but there is no vaccine to protect any of us against viral meningitis. So here again, prevention is the key.

Bacterial meningitis is a serious disease, and it too progresses very quickly. It will go from mild flu-like symptoms at the beginning, and within 48 hours, or sometimes less, you will be very, very sick. Suspected cases of bacterial meningitis require immediate medical attention.

I see that my time is running out here.

Ça me fait plaisir de célébrer la journée du 24 avril, qui deviendra la journée pour la méningite.

J'ai commencé ma carrière comme physiothérapeute, et comme physiothérapeute j'ai eu l'occasion de travailler avec plusieurs patients, surtout des enfants, qui avaient eu la méningite et qui se sont retrouvés avec des handicaps neurologiques sévères.

Il y a un petit garçon en particulier qui avait été hospitalisé là où je travaillais, au plancher de la pédiatrie, qui a eu la méningite. Je l'ai traité en soins actifs, et je l'ai revu plus tard lorsque je travaillais au centre de traitement pour enfants. J'aurais le goût de vous dire son nom parce qu'il a très bien réussi, mais il continue de vivre avec un handicap sévère. Il a appris à adapter sa vie

pour vivre une vie heureuse, complète et productive, mais la vie aurait pu être beaucoup plus facile pour ce jeune garçon et sa famille si un peu de prévention avait été là.

On parle ici de prévention avec les vaccins qui peuvent nous protéger—pas de toutes les formes de méningite, mais de plusieurs formes de méningite, et surtout celles qui sont les plus difficiles à gérer. Mais il y en a d'autres, comme les méningites virales, pour lesquelles il n'y a pas de vaccin; il faut vraiment garder un système immunitaire en santé.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Merci. Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First, I want to thank my colleague the member from Kitchener-Conestoga for inviting me to speak on this bill about proclaiming April 24 in each year as Meningitis Awareness Day.

I'm not a doctor, I'm not a nurse, and I'm not a specialist in this area. So I accepted the invitation to speak, but in the back of my mind I was depending on my wife; she's a medical doctor. I took all the information to her, and she was so happy to feed me all the details about meningitis and the effect on the children and many people across the province of Ontario and across the world.

I learned a lot, and I want to congratulate the member for bringing such an important issue to this House to create awareness among the people of this province. It's very important to protect our children and young adults, because it's important to protect our future.

I learned about meningococcal disease. Meningitis bacteria sometimes hide in the nose and the throat. It's sometimes found in between 5% and 10% of healthy people and can be attracted by healthy people, which they call the carrier of the bacteria, and also by sick people through coughing, sneezing, using some materials together and giving it to another person. I think it's a dangerous bacteria. It will affect the life of many people.

From my studies, I found that this disease is very dangerous and very effective because it spreads fast and quick. Sometimes it hits the blood, and when it hits the blood, it's very difficult to cure. It causes death quick and fast. Also, if people trying to prevent it find it before the bacteria controls the whole body and has spread throughout the body or attacks the brain, sometimes we can cure it, but the result of that can cause damage to the person: limping, mental illness etc.

I think it's important to talk about this issue and bring it forward to this place, and talk about it especially from the experts in this room. I know my colleague who is going to speak after me is a doctor. Also the member from the north is a nurse, and she knows more than me on this disease—from Nickel Belt. Sorry. She knows more about it, and she spoke in detail of the effect of this disease and the symptoms, inviting all families, all parents, when they see those symptoms in their kids, to rush to the hospital or call 911, because it's very important, especially if the symptoms are very obvious, like a stiff neck, headache, vomiting, nausea and many different things.

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It happens that for persons who attract this bacteria, it is trying to control their bodies. The preventing way—that's the best way to prevent this from happening. Sometimes, as I mentioned, it comes from the person and they carry it for many different years, but it does not appear in the body unless something happens. Sometimes we cannot see it until contracted by the person for one or two days.

My wife told me a story. A client brought her daughter, and they thought at the beginning that she had a sore throat. They didn't treat her very well, and she went back home. The parents brought her back early in the morning, but the disease was in control of the body of that child, and also affected the blood of the child so they couldn't do anything, even though she'd been given the vaccinations, which she needed badly back then. They didn't help much, because I guess the bacteria was in control of the body and caused the death.

I want to thank the member from Kitchener-Conestoga for bringing this important issue to us, and educating us and the people of Ontario about the dangers of this disease. Of course, I'm going to vote in support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): With the members' indulgence, I would like to welcome the grade 5 class from Nottawasaga and Creemore Public School to Queen's Park today and to the legislative chamber. I ask for your indulgence because they're from my riding.

Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm honoured to speak today in support of Bill 2, An Act to proclaim April 24 in each year as Meningitis Awareness Day.

At the outset, I would like to commend the member from Kitchener-Conestoga for bringing this really important issue forward. I'm hopeful that, as a result of our discussion this afternoon in this Legislature, we're going to help foster a greater awareness of the symptoms of meningitis; dispel some of the misconceptions surrounding the use of the meningitis vaccine; and stress to all Ontarians the importance of having your child vaccinated against meningitis.

I'm grateful to Kathryn and to MacKenzie's family for being here, for sharing your stories about the losses of your children. I can only imagine how difficult it is, but please know that we greatly appreciate it, as members of the Legislature.

I'd also like to thank Dr. Gold for the tremendous work that you are doing. It's very important that we protect our children, and your ongoing research is going to be making that possible. Thank you for that.

I think that the members who have already spoken have raised some excellent points about how serious an illness meningitis is, and about some of the symptoms of meningitis. Thank you to the member from Nickel Belt.

We know that there are two primary kinds of meningitis, viral and bacterial. We can't do much other than just prevention with respect to viral, but with respect to bacterial, there is a vaccination, and we need to make sure our children are vaccinated. But unfortunately, there

is a lot of misinformation out in the public domain that I think needs to be corrected so that our children can receive the protection they need.

It started with a study that was published in *The Lancet*, a British medical journal, in 1998 that suggested that parts of the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine were linked to autism spectrum disorders. That sort of spread to some of the other vaccines, including the meningitis vaccine. That has since been disproven, but there's still a lot of information out there on the Internet, on websites and so on. I think people need to clearly get the message that that has been retracted; that there is no causal link that has been demonstrated; that the meningitis vaccines are extremely safe; and that people should make sure that their children, once they hit the age of 11, should be vaccinated. I can't stress that enough.

The other part that I would like to just share briefly with you is my own family's experience, not with meningitis but with encephalitis. As many of you know, meningitis is an inflammation of the lining of the brain. Encephalitis is an inflammation of the brain itself.

My son John contracted encephalitis when he was 16 months old. He went from being a happy child to being rushed into the Hospital for Sick Children in an ambulance with his pediatrician, who wasn't quite sure if he was going to make it or not. He was in status epilepticus all night, which is constant convulsions. He crashed twice and spent a month and a half in the Hospital for Sick Children. I can't tell you how grateful I am to both his pediatrician; the staff at Lakeridge Health, Oshawa; and the staff at the Hospital for Sick Children. Thankfully, John was saved.

I can only tell you as a parent and implore all of you—to all Ontarians who are watching today—how important it is. You don't want to have any family go through that, as Michael and MacKenzie's family did. This is an extremely important public service message that the member from Kitchener-Conestoga has brought forward. I hope you all take it to heart, and anybody who's listening, make sure you have your children vaccinated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm really delighted to also lend my support to Bill 2, an act to inform the public essentially about the risks of meningococcal disease.

I learned about the signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease long before I became a physician because one of the stories I wanted my mother to tell me over and over was about the time that she, in fact, contracted meningococcal meningitis. This was during the Second World War. She had volunteered for the Women's Royal Naval Service, and as a WREN she was deployed to Belfast, Northern Ireland. She was living in a dormitory with some 20 other young ladies. One morning, she awoke with the most terrible headache. She had a rash all over her body—I remember her describing it to me: "Little broken blood vessels" is what she said it looked like—a high fever. She was lucky enough to receive immediate medical attention and was treated, I think in

those days, probably with sulphur drugs and survived. She always finished her story with a great flourish and of course, "If I had died, you would not have been born." I think it is that sense of lost opportunity that touches us so with the stories of the families who are here.

I certainly remember, as medical officer of health for York region, in the early 1990s we were seeing a number of outbreaks of meningitis. I remember extremely well the story of a vibrant 17-year-old young lady who was a dancer, who had unfortunately been turned away from the hospital—"Just the flu"—and, in fact, was found dead in her bed the next morning.

The type of panic, of course, that ensued led many medical officers of health in those days to go against some of the recommendations of the Ministry of Health of the day and, in fact, to conduct very large vaccination programs for potential contacts of those who had had the disease.

We have seen real progress in terms of vaccination programs. In fact, under the NDP—on Thursday afternoons we try to be less partisan—I remember that the hemophilus influenza B vaccine became universally available and was widely disseminated. Our government, more recently, has expanded to cover meningitis from *Neisseria meningitidis*, and we're now covering four strains of that particular disease.

But the irony is that as we have successful vaccination programs, perhaps the index of suspicion on the part of parents and even medical personnel is not as high; in other words, they don't expect to see this type of disease. I'm sure Dr. Gold well remembers that when we had a resurgence of measles some 20 years ago, again, many cases went undiagnosed in our emergency departments.

Again, I'd like to commend the member from Kitchener-Conestoga for bringing this bill forward to increase our awareness—all of us, individuals, parents and, of course, those caring for those who are sick, and all the health care professions as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm going to take a little bit of a different tack in the discussion this afternoon for this bill, and that is to indicate to you that I've got a file about an inch and a half thick that I did some research on in terms of meningitis. I want to personalize this a little bit and, first off, compliment my colleague and friend from Kitchener-Conestoga, Ms. Pendergast, for bringing this to the House's attention, for her passion—that's first and foremost. As an educator, I know that she feels it's important to educate, and that's part of this whole process. The member from Kitchener, Ms. Witmer, is of the same ilk and uses that as an opportunity to educate people. This is a day that, if declared, will be used as a springboard to continue educating, which is an important aspect of what we're talking about.

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But the piece that I want to talk about to Ms. Blain is a personal story that I hope she takes to heart. In my riding, a gentleman by the name of Doug Summerhayes and his

wife, Donna Summerhayes, lost two children to cystic fibrosis. They too became champions, because there was no organization at that time, to explain to people what it means to lose a loved one. Because of their work and determination, they eventually became Orders of Canada, because of their grassroots participation and the tenacity that they had that turned a disaster, a crisis, a heart-wrenching story into a positive. To the family members of Ms. Clough and Ms. Blain and to all of those who have had to suffer losing a child and losing a loved one, I say to you, there's hope, and having hope is what holds us together. So I want to compliment you and thank you. I know that the members here would do the same, to say to you that you deserve the accolades we are giving you today and the support that you're asking for in terms of the province of Ontario and, indeed, I would respectfully suggest, the country.

My hope is that we can take what is being talked about today and the work that you've done from the beginning to now—and I know that it will never end for you—to continue to turn this into a positive, which is exactly what you are attempting to do. To you and the family members, rest assured that your path will still be taken, now with the Legislature in mind, and that people like the Summerhayeses and yourselves can rely on us to make the connect as human beings to understand what we can do together.

Now, I do laud my colleagues for bringing to the attention of the House the severity of the ailment. When they hear "meningitis," people know that there's something wrong and that there's something going on with this, but the human connect is what I wanted to talk about today, and I wanted to thank you for sharing that. It's a very difficult thing to take from your heart what you have to carry with you from day to day and make it public, so I wanted to take the time to say thank you. In comparison to what we do here every day, you've lived more than one life. Thank you for what you're doing for us today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Pendergast, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I wanted to thank my colleagues and just say, wow, what quality of debate. There are a lot of tears in the House today, and rightly so, and hence why we are all here today to talk about the awareness and to continue to work on that awareness in Ontario.

I wanted to thank the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, who talked about the importance to our community and Ontarians and the global efforts, and thank her for her efforts. I look forward to continuing to work with her to support Kathryn and her group.

I thank the member from Nickel Belt for her work in health promotion and her comments here today.

I want to thank the member from London-Fanshawe for his awareness, and thank his wife as well for her contribution, for her education on the details you provided us today.

I want to thank the member from Whitby—Oshawa for the awareness piece that you spoke of, and of course for your personal story, for sharing your son's story with us here today. Thank you so much.

I want to thank the member from Oak Ridges—Markham for talking about risks and giving some insights and background from her medical background, and her personal stories of her mother.

To the member from Brant, always, thank you so much for your personal stories, your insight, your guidance, your parallels that you've drawn.

And we'll look to work with the member from Kitchener—Waterloo in our community and continue to support the Meningitis Research Foundation.

I truly wanted to thank Kathryn Blain, mother of Michael Longo, for being here today, and her husband, Don Blain, a retired platoon chief from the Kitchener fire department, for his support.

I want to thank Mary Clough and Cassandra Clough for being with us today and for sharing your story with all of Ontario about MacKenzie.

I want to thank Dr. Ron Gold and Karen Mayfield also for being with us here today to honour the memory and to look forward to where we're going.

I do want to leave you with two thoughts from the two mothers. "I don't want to see another family experience what we're going through. You never get over losing a child," says Mary Clough. Kathryn Blain says to us, "Please do not let this happen to your child. Immunize and protect your loved ones. There is no getting over the loss of a child. It's a wound that never completely heals."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. For those guests with us in the gallery here today and those watching at home, we will vote on this ballot item in about 100 minutes.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Bob Delaney: I move that in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation, shall publish by June 30, 2010, an updated project schedule for the Metrolinx regional transportation plan, reviewing the priorities set out in 2007 by that date to place the highest priorities for capacity expansion of inter-regional rail capacity on those regions with the greatest population growth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bob Delaney: As members of this Legislature, we can't directly command the agencies, the boards, the ministries and the crown corporations of Ontario to actually do something, but you can start a discussion about an important topic, and what we say before you, Speaker, matters. What we think here in this Legislature carries the weight of the consensus of many of the 13 million Ontarians for whom our province is home. And while we cannot actually command the agencies, ministries and

crown corporations, we can frequently shine a light upon them bright enough to cause them to do the right things.

This resolution reminds those who shape the policies of Metrolinx, which is an agency that coordinates how we knit together the bodies that deliver public transit, of the need for an ongoing dialogue with, and the trust of, those of us who either put money in the fare box or represent the citizens who have sent us here to speak on their behalf.

Where this process works well, we build a consensus that allows us to serve our riders. It allows us to get people out of one-occupant cars, it allows us to build facilities on time and within budget, and it allows us to reduce the greenhouse gases that we pump into the atmosphere.

Where and when our dialogue fails, we end up with frustrated riders who feel that they are being forced back into their cars—riders who look upon a group of business suits with disdain because sometimes it seems that they're simply afraid to talk to us. That's the crux of this resolution in a nutshell.

What it asks our government to accomplish with Metrolinx is basically this: Talk with our riders, listen to their elected representatives, tell us what you're going to do, tell us when your process is going to start and tell us by when it should be complete.

Those who are going to present here today each serve different regions, and they're going to bring a unique perspective to this debate. We've each been sent to the Legislature by more than 100,000 people. We've each learned their problems and their needs, and that for every one of us speaking today, at least another four or five could stand and make an equally valuable contribution.

I guess the message to Metrolinx is to listen carefully and work with us, because we truly are all in this together.

Personally, I'd like to talk about some of the challenges facing Mississauga and, by extension, the towns of Halton Hills and Milton. Those sleepy farm fields of the mid-1990s are now bustling housing communities, and I speak particularly of the area west of Winston Churchill, north of Highway 403, and the area now encompassed by the towns of Halton Hills and Milton.

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In many cases, these were communities with decades of unbroken history and tradition that, after nearly a century of a way of life that evolved at a gracious—indeed, glacial—pace, suddenly exploded with growth. People who lived there had to get to where they needed to work, where they needed to study or where they needed to find recreation.

Here are a few figures—and the mid-1990s are well within much of our living memories. Back then, speaking strictly of the Milton line, some 5,300 people each day rode GO trains—I'm speaking just about the trains—into Toronto in the morning and out in the evening, because one of the constraints we have with Canadian Pacific, which owns the line, is that they only have the capacity, using it as they do at nearly 100% of capacity for freight, to have a window of time going into Toronto in the

morning and from Toronto back home, for those of us who ride it—and I'm one of them—in the evening. It is not all-day service. Still, 5,300 people each day could get out of their cars 15 years ago. By 10 years ago, it was double that. Today, it's nearly triple that and growing.

I want to start with some of the areas in which we've made some progress. In September 2007, some nine weeks ahead of schedule and substantially under budget, GO opened a new train station at Lisgar in western Mississauga. Why was it under budget? Why was it ahead of schedule? Because GO—Metrolinx didn't exist at that point—did it right. They talked to the people of the community of Lisgar. They listened very carefully to their concerns. People had a chance to go to the public meetings, usually in the sweltering heat—although most of the events around Lisgar occurred in the freezing cold—and all of our objections, our issues and our needs were answered fully. The consensus was, "Get on with it," and there was no opposition. We had that project finished.

I especially have to acknowledge the unique and valuable contribution of Mississauga ward 9 Councillor Pat Saito. She watched it from the city end, I watched it from the provincial end, and we made sure that nothing of any consequence went wrong. We got our GO train station. We got it ahead of schedule. We got it under budget.

In June 2008, at the Streetsville GO station, then-Minister of Transportation Jim Bradley and I announced the streamlined environmental assessment process for GO. They have the tools to do capital expansion.

In September 2008, there were 12-car trains on all Milton trips, which increased the capacity on each train by 20%. If we only had a narrow window of time, at least we were able to get more people on the trains. And in specific terms, if you got on that train at Erindale, Cooksville, Dixie or Kipling, chances are you could now get a seat.

In November 2008, platform expansions and improvements to the Streetsville station were finally finished, and now you no longer have to trudge all the way up the parking lot in order to get on the train; you can take the little shortcut underneath the tracks and get straight onto the platform. It was something we had talked about as a community for a long time. We finally got it done. It was a great step forward. We also had a major fix-up to that station. There was a new snowmelt system installed and new accessibility improvements made at Meadowvale.

In March 2009, the eco-friendly Streetsville bus facility was opened. It means that buses no longer have to deadhead to a repair facility; they can now come straight in and be serviced for their morning trip right at Streetsville.

By 2009, we had 19 new GO bus trips on the Milton line, and in April of last year, we had the installation of a wind turbine for power generation at the Lisgar GO station. There were no problems with the local people, because GO Transit listened very carefully, understood the neighbours' needs and issues, and answered every

one of them. To this day, we have no issues whatsoever with the capital expansion, which has been aggressive on the Milton line.

But there's a project we need on the Milton line that is very important, and it is all-day service. What we need to have in order to do that is another track on the Milton line. The line's owner, CP Rail, does recognize that. Indeed, CP Rail has said, "Okay, we'll see your ante and raise you. You're talking about one extra track on the Milton line in order to have all-day, two-way GO service, much as they do on the Lakeshore line."

This is really critical in those fast-growing communities, because in the city of Mississauga we have a daily labour shortage of 50,000 people; that many more people each day commute into the city of Mississauga than commute out of it, and the same is true in those growing cities through Halton and York region. Many more people than before are commuting from Toronto into those fast-growing cities. We've got to have the facilities in order to get them from where they live to where they work, both ways, and that's one of the key areas that we need to have on the Milton line. CP Rail has proposed not just one track, but two tracks. Those two tracks would enable us to have that all-day, two-way GO train service. That's what it truly does take to get people out of their cars.

In my own case, I'm now actually able to take transit in to come here to Queen's Park. To give you an idea of some of the challenges that we have to work through, when I walk out of my home in the morning, I walk up a short distance to get on the Mississauga transit bus at the corner of Churchill Meadows Boulevard and Tacc, and then I have to drop 60 cents into the fare box and show them my GO train pass, because that fare is partially subsidized by GO. I've taken one mode of transit, operated by one independent company, and paid for it in cash, one way.

I am then taken to the Streetsville GO station, where I get on the GO train. Then I put my 10-ride pass in, cancel it, and I get on to the GO train, which in 40 minutes takes me to Union Station. So I have now ridden on my second mode of transit operated by an independent company, and paid for it in a second, different way.

At Union Station, I go through what is hopefully going to be a work in progress that will finally give us a world-class hub where people can properly connect and get to where their ultimate destination is. At the moment, when you compare that with any other world-class city that you've been in, if you're commuting in and out of Union Station, you think, "Gosh, I'm a little embarrassed."

Then I ride the TTC, a third independent company, in to Queen's Park, which I've paid for in a third different way—with a token. This is the thing that we need Metrolinx to finish doing with the Presto fare card, which should begin service later this year. This is something that we need to knit together a great deal better than we do today.

The capacity expansion on the Milton GO line is a project which is vitally important to the citizens of

Mississauga, Halton Hills, Milton and beyond, where we can get people to park their cars, leave them there and take a clean, fast, efficient, non-polluting train that gets them downtown. More importantly, in the future it's going to get all the people in the Metro Toronto area who are going to be commuting out to work in some of the big bank buildings that are being built in western Mississauga, and enable them to commute out from Toronto and ride transit all day, both ways.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: This debate is indeed timely, and I want to thank my colleague for bringing forward his resolution.

On Tuesday evening of this past week, I hosted a public meeting for my constituents, for the purpose of ensuring that they have factual information concerning the announced cancellation of two GO bus services along Yonge Street: from Newmarket through to York Mills, and from Newmarket with a terminus at York University.

The information about the cancellation of those routes began to trickle out to riders of those two services over a period of time, and it was very soon that that trickle became a torrent of emails and calls to my office. The reason for that is that my constituents who use that bus route, that Yonge Street line, on a daily basis to make their way to work or, for many students and faculty, to York University, began to do the calculation of what the impact of the cancellation of those two bus routes would mean to them. The calculation is that for most of those riders it means an increase of some \$85 and more per month. On a daily basis, it translates into additional time of travel of an hour, and up to two hours in some cases. So we wanted to ensure that there was factual information available.

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I invited representatives from GO Transit as well as YRT/Viva to participate in that public meeting. Unfortunately, it was confirmed by both GO representatives, as well as YRT, that the calculation of the additional cost of some \$85-plus and additional travel time of an hour to two hours for many of these constituents was, in fact, accurate. At the end of the evening, it became apparent to me that we were taking a step back as opposed to a step forward in making public transit in York region more attractive and encouraging more people to use public transit. I have a serious concern that in this particular case, this decision on the part of GO Transit is wrong, and it is unacceptable. I am calling on Metrolinx and GO Transit as well as YRT/Viva to rethink this decision; to stop in their tracks and ensure that these two very important transit lines are continued.

I'm glad to see the Minister of Transportation here today. I have copied her on a letter that is going out to all mayors and councils in York region this afternoon. It is also copied to Mr. Bill Fisch, the York region chair, as well as Mr. Robert Prichard, CEO of Metrolinx. I want to read this letter into the record, because I believe it summarizes the issue. I am also hoping that I have the

support of the Minister of Transportation. I'm confident that, as Metrolinx as well as YRT/Viva consider the implications of this decision, we will have their co-operation. The letter reads as follows:

"GO Transit has announced that it plans to cancel two GO bus routes serving York region, effective next month.

"The two routes affected are the 62 Newmarket 'B' GO bus that provides services along Yonge Street from Newmarket to York Mills, and GO route 64, providing service through York region to York University.

"At a public meeting on March 9, 2010, attended by more than 300 York region residents, representatives from GO Transit and YRT/Viva confirmed that the proposed cancellation would result in increased costs of as much as \$85 per month, and increased travel times of as much as one to two hours per day, depending on the alternative Viva service that would be available. In addition, there are numerous unintended consequences that would result if the cancellations are allowed to proceed. Those consequences range from safety implications for young people who rely on these routes to get them to school, and scheduling issues for students and faculty at York University, to working parents who will be unable to manage already difficult daycare schedules.

"I have expressed my concerns on behalf of my constituents to Mr. Robert Prichard, the CEO of Metrolinx, and to York region chair Bill Fisch and am asking for your support to ensure that both of these GO bus services are continued.

"It is clear that YRT/Viva is not in a position to assume responsibility for the services GO Transit is planning to cancel. YRT/Viva is a regional service and is not equipped to provide ... the equipment, nor the scheduling capacity to accept this download of service responsibility.

"It is unacceptable that at a time when governments at all levels are investing billions in public transit with a view to encouraging transit use, we allow this proposed cancellation to take place. Not only will the increased costs and travel times discourage transit use; this contradicts and is in conflict with the very goals and objectives of the Metrolinx regional transportation plan" mandated by this government. That plan "is intended to guide transportation decision-making and planning" of transportation "at all levels.

"Those objectives are clearly stated to provide: 'Improved transportation experience and travel time reliability; faster, more frequent and less crowded transit; improved connections on services within the GTHA....'

"I trust that you will agree with me that the proposed cancellations are not only inconsistent with the Metrolinx mandate; they run counter to our concerted efforts to encourage York region residents to choose public transit as a more convenient and affordable way to travel.

"I am therefore asking you and your council to register with Metrolinx and GO Transit your opposition to the planned cancellation of these essential GO bus services."

That letter will be received by all mayors and council within York region this afternoon. As I say, it has been

copied to the Minister of Transportation, to Mr. Prichard at Metrolinx, as well as to Chair Fisch at York region.

I understand the rationale that GO has put forward to cancel these routes because, in their words, their intention was to integrate and to avoid duplication—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: And you supported it when you were Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Frank Klees: What I did, as Minister of Transportation—I encouraged any action possible amongst regions and the province to avoid duplication. And what was intended was that, in fact, services would be adopted by regional transit services that would be equivalent to and provide the same level of service and efficiency at the same cost. What is happening here is not what I intended as minister. It not what this minister should endorse. It is wrong.

What should be happening here is that we put the commuters first, that we ensure that if there are any changes made to the delivery of service, efficiency is increased, accessibility is increased, affordability is made more accessible. That is not what is happening here.

So I say to those who are in a position of responsibility: This decision cannot be allowed to be implemented. I will do everything possible to reason with those in a position of responsibility to ensure that we enhance public transit throughout York region, that we do not take a step backwards.

I would expect that we would have the support of all of my colleagues who represent the region of York. I would expect that the Minister of Transportation would take the time rationally and reasonably to assess what I am asking, and that she also would support my call for a reasonable approach to this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

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Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and speak to the motion put forward by the member from Mississauga—Streetsville. I think the resolution that he brings forward is well crafted and wise.

I can say that from the perspective of a person who represented a growth community as it grew from a sleepy little town of between 40,000 and 60,000 people to approaching 200,000 people today. That's over a period of about 20 to 25 years. That, of course, is the community of Oakville.

What people may not know about Oakville and its train service is that the GO station in Oakville—we have two; we have the Bronte station and we have the Oakville station—after Union Station in downtown Toronto, is the busiest of all the other stations on the line. Certainly, that is because of the important role that it plays in ensuring that the city of Toronto has the skilled workers to perform some of the economic tasks that need to be performed on a daily basis. Many of those skilled workers and employees choose to reside in the town of Oakville, so the service is really important to the economic lifeblood of my own community and certainly to the economic lifeblood of Mayor Miller's community.

The transportation issue, I think, is one that mirrors a lot of the growth issues that communities such as Oakville and the region of Halton have had to face over the years. Most of that growth, obviously, is as a result of population, of people who choose to move to the areas as new plans of subdivision are approved and as official plans are amended to allow for that growth to take place.

What had happened in the past is often the people, by a long shot, preceded the services. People would be moving into the communities with an expectation that they would have arenas; that they would have libraries; that, should they need to use social services, those services would be available; that the transportation system that was envisioned for the community would be one that would be at such capacity that they'd be able to move around the town freely and move in between towns freely—to move, for example, to my neighbour Mississauga—Streetsville, for economic reasons or simply for reasons of social travel or for pleasure.

What happened, though, is that the people came, and for the most part, the services didn't. Frustration started to emerge. People were finding they were in gridlock. People were finding that the train service, perhaps, that was servicing Toronto on a daily basis was not adequate, that the bus services that were being provided were not adequate. If ever a problem called for a solution such as Metrolinx, the transportation issues certainly did on an inter-regional basis.

I'm describing problems that took place in my own community of Oakville. I think you could also translate those same issues, those same problems, into Durham, to York region and to Peel region, those areas in the 905 that grew at the same type of rates that we're still experiencing in the region of Halton.

We've seen some improvements over the years. The QEW is being widened through Oakville, following on some of the great work of the Ministry of Transportation. We're starting to see the libraries and the sports fields being built. As a result of the initiative of this government to share the gas tax, we're starting to see investments being made in transit. That goes back to a time of when there was really no forward planning to a point where we've started to do the forward planning that should have been done in the past.

It's interesting to note that a lot of our work is still based on old census figures, rather than on the current population figures.

For the most part, GO Transit provides a wonderful service to the community of Oakville. In the winter, we often have problems with switch gear freezing. I know that GO Transit is working hard to try to remedy that. Some days they're successful at it; some days they find it challenging, and the frustrations of my constituents certainly grow.

But transportation from Toronto and to Toronto on a daily basis is a major priority for both Oakville and Toronto. We've seen increased parking. We've seen increased train service. We've seen the length of trains increase. Engines have increased in power. We have been able to improve the capacity.

What the resolution does, in my opinion, is it calls for us to do a bit of an update to the figures that are being done to allocate the funding that is necessary to the projects that are going to be performed by Metrolinx. I think as you expand, we need to take into account that growth communities need that special attention to deal with the problems that come with that sudden population growth.

Growth communities like Oakville and Milton, for example, don't grow gradually. They grow very, very suddenly. A subdivision opens, and the homes are sold in a matter of weeks or months, and those services need to be there.

I would hope that all members would support this resolution. Certainly it has my support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's where I'm going. How did you know that's what I was going to ask for? You're clairvoyant, I must say.

First of all, upfront I just want to say that we'll support this resolution. Its intent, I guess, is not harmful. There are other things I would have added to it if it was my motion. But perfection was not built in a day, as they say, so we'll support the motion in its current form.

I just want to make a couple of comments, though, in regard to Metrolinx and also specifically to this motion. I guess the first thing I would say is that if one of the attempts of this motion is to get Metrolinx to become—how would you say?—a little bit more democratic in the ability to consult with people, to make sure that the riders and the communities they service are more well informed and that decisions that are made are done in such a way that there's a dialogue between the communities that utilize Metrolinx services and Metrolinx themselves, that would be a great thing. I don't think it's going to get to that in this particular motion, and that's a little bit of a shame because I think what I know—I shouldn't say "I think." What I know is an issue is that every member of this assembly who has to deal with Metrolinx has somewhat the same concern, and that is that Metrolinx may not be as user-friendly when it comes to consultation and when it comes to supporting the need to do public consultation as they need to be.

I've participated in meetings in York-Weston and a few other places in regard to the Blue 22 issue, and I can tell you, in the meetings that I've been to, that came across in spades. People were really upset and felt as if they were not being listened to, to the degree they thought they should have been. They were not able to engage in the dialogue and affect the decisions of Metrolinx because of that failure to have that two-way dialogue with Metrolinx and the people who utilize those services.

So if the stated goal of this motion is to democratize, let us say, the process by which Metrolinx makes its

decisions, this motion doesn't do that, and I think that's one of the failures. That's one of the things I would have added in there, because there are all kinds of examples. We just heard from a couple of members who spoke about the services in the communities that they represent as members. I would say that, generally, there's support for Metrolinx, but they can do a much better job of hearing concerns and then responding to those concerns and finding solutions to those concerns that are raised not only by members of this assembly but also by people from municipal councils, but, more importantly, the public, the very people who use them.

I want to say as well, in regard to Metrolinx: Could we be doing a better job of moving people from point A to point B within the Metrolinx system? Absolutely. I think it's a bit nuts that we have a system set up the way it is now. Mr. Delaney, I think, made the point, and I agree with him, that it is a little bit ludicrous that you have to pay a fare at one end when you get on to the GO train, wherever it might be, let's say in Oakville, and then have to pay a transit fee in the city of Toronto and probably have to pay a transit fee in the municipality that you come from. There should be, certainly to God, in this day and age a way to bring those three tokens into one.

I've had the opportunity to travel the world on a number of occasions to see different cities at my own expense, and sometimes as a member of this assembly, and I've got to say that that is the case in most jurisdictions. If you go to Hong Kong, Paris, London or many cities of the world—if you go to Tokyo, that's the way it's done. You buy a token on the basis of where you're going. For example, if you're in Hong Kong, you get on at the airport and you want to go to Kowloon, or Central city, it's called, you pay a fare commensurate with where you're going. If I go further, I pay a little bit more, but it's one fare. If I get off and have to get on a bus, a streetcar or whatever it might be to get to where I'm going, I pay that fare. You pay it once and you have the ticket with you and it brings you from point A to point B. You don't have to go to three different ticket agents to get a ticket to get on the bus at first that brings you to the GO train, that brings you to the subway, the bus or the streetcar. There is one fare that brings you across the system.

1510

I would say, for the budget deliberations of the city of Toronto, what a favour we'd be doing them if we could upload the transit system of the city of Toronto to a more regional style of governance, where it was off of their books, because clearly a big part of the costs of the city of Toronto—I recognize that—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't know if your brothers at the city would be happy with that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, yeah. I'm just saying—to the Minister of Transportation, you're probably right, but can you imagine the relief that would do for the city's ability to plan and budget?

But where do you draw the line? I recognize there's difficulty in doing that. What about the city of Timmins?

What about Thunder Bay? What about Ottawa, Sudbury, Hamilton and other municipalities across Ontario that have transit systems? Is it only the city of Toronto that should be treated in that way? I think those are legitimate concerns, and I would imagine that's part of the reason why we haven't done it. But my point is, there should at least be one fare. Why we're not at that point yet, I think, is a little bit odd, to say the least.

The other point I would like to make is the issue of this new coalition that was put together, which was the Clean Train Coalition. I think we need to mention the work that they're trying to do. I think it speaks exactly to the point that I made earlier about the democratization of the process by which citizens can be heard by Metrolinx. They've been working with GO Transit and Metrolinx for some time now in order to start working on reducing, if not eliminating, the use of diesel trains and moving to electric trains in order to diminish the amount of pollution and diesel emissions that are coming from the trains as they run through those communities, and also the noise pollution as a result of the diesel engines being loud. The response that Metrolinx and GO Transit have given these people is, "Don't worry. We'll make a decision to go to tier 4 diesels as a way of being able to make it cleaner." But the issue is, tier 4—the point I'm trying to make—doesn't even exist yet.

The point I go back to is, people want to know that they can have an effect on the ultimate decisions made by Metrolinx, so that at the end of the day the system more closely reflects the values of the riders in the society, and at the same time the service is done in such a way that it meets those goals.

I have to say, I agree with some of the comments made earlier, where there is a call in a number of areas to increase the amount of frequency on schedule for many of the communities that are served by GO Transit. If you're trying to travel in the middle of the afternoon, or late morning, it's pretty hard to use GO Transit because of the schedule. You're more or less forced to get into your car. If our objective is to move people from cars to trains and to try to eliminate and reduce the amount of pollution going into our atmosphere, that is a key component, and I think it's something we need to deal with. Is it easy to be able to do that? Absolutely not. Are there real issues preventing them from doing it? Of course: the issue of extra trackage, the issue of being able to have the dollars to do it. But again, I think we need to be much more aggressive in getting us to that point.

The other point I want to make—I've only got a few minutes left, and I really want to make this point. Mr. Delaney makes a point in his motion that says—I'll just paraphrase here; boy, it's fun to do this when you don't have your glasses—"to place the highest priorities for capacity expansion of inter-regional rail capacity on those regions with the greatest population growth."

I would make two points on that one. The first point is, do we reward those communities that properly plan and try to prevent urban sprawl? Because the effect of that could be, in fact, that you bonus those communities

that encourage urban sprawl. I think we need to think about what that really means.

The other point is, there's an argument to be made that you don't want to necessarily put all of your investments in those places of greatest need all the time. I understand the logic. Where there's greatest need, we should be trying to respond to the need. I get the argument; don't get me wrong. But there are many places in Ontario where services are required, and it may not necessarily be because of the amount of people who ride the train.

I use as an example the Ontario Northland. The Ontario Northland is a provincial asset; it's owned by the province of Ontario. If you were to deal with only being able to provide services as a result of the amount of people who take that train, I think we'd be in pretty big trouble, because there isn't the population base by which to do that. But if you were to eliminate that train—and I'm not saying they're going to—it means to say that many people, for example, on the James Bay coast would have absolutely no other way of getting out of the community of Moosonee other than coming out by plane, because there are no roads. For other people living along Highway 11, who live in communities from Cochrane South down to Toronto, there are a number of people who would not have any other option to get to Toronto or other cities or communities along Highway 11 on the ONR if it was strictly based on frequency and the amount of people who actually use the train.

I think we need to make some key investments, recognizing that it is a service that we provide communities in order to get access to transportation. Transportation is one of the key issues when it comes to economic development. If you can't get to the communities and if you can't leave the communities in a way that's easy, economical and makes some sense, it's pretty hard to do economic development in those communities.

I would argue that we probably need to do some pretty serious investment in railway systems like the Ontario Northland and the ACR—the Algoma Central Railway—looking at restoring some form of service along Highway 17 and up through Thunder Bay. I think there are some services—I'm sure there are other places around Ontario where we really need to rethink our policy when it comes to transportation via rail, both for freight and for people, beyond what it is now. Because certainly, we're missing the boat when it comes to providing those services that are so needed within those communities.

Again, I say, we will support the motion because we think the motion is a step forward. Does it do what I would like to see when it comes to the democratization of the process? No, it doesn't speak to that. But as I said at the beginning of the debate, I think it's important that you look at this as one step forward in a walk of many steps.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to stand in my place in support of my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville. The member from Mississauga—Streetsville cer-

tainly has many strengths. One is his excruciatingly incredible attention to detail, and that's certainly reflected in his motion today. It's with that in mind that I'm very supportive of what he's done. I agree with the previous speaker: It is indeed timely.

Our government has embarked on what can only be described as an ambitious and much-needed strategy to improve public transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas. The scale of the projects and the investments being made require that we keep a close eye on the natural demographic changes that occur in the province and ensure that the plans are planned, in large part, accordingly. This resolution, therefore, is important in re-evaluating the situation based on economic changes as we move forward and, of course, our Places to Grow document. It's helpful to stop every once in a while, I think the member from Brant would agree, to kind of revisit where we're at and rethink our priorities.

Mr. Dave Levac: Absolutely.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Thousands of Ontarians in these regions rely every day on public transit to get them to and from work, families, friends and other priorities. Many people live in a different city than they work in. They count on dependable service that would get them where they need to go. That's what the MoveOntario 2020 initiative is, a step forward in keeping up with growing populations and changing population patterns. It includes some 52 rapid-transit improvements and expansion projects, projected over a 12-year period, that would add some 902 kilometres of new public transit links within the GTA. That's incredible. In fact, our government is rapidly approaching the stage where we're almost investing as much in public transit as we are in roads. Hopefully, that day will come soon, and that will be historic.

I'm particularly pleased that part of the initiative will include my riding of Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale. Already, we've seen improvements in GO services, including:

- daily bus service to Niagara Falls since 2009;
- a Hamilton train layover facility, which helps provide more reliable service to the Hamilton region, also created in 2009;
- an additional train from the Hamilton GO Centre every morning since 2009;
- a 20% increase in capacity of the Lakeshore West line since 2008; and,
- the new GO bus transit terminal at McMaster University, which now contains five bus bays, heated shelters, and provides services to more than 2,000 riders per day.

I've often said that good public transit prevails when it can be made convenient for people. People won't take transit unless it's convenient—all the more reason to revisit just how all the pieces fit together.

1520

I also know that an environmental assessment is currently under way to ensure that we can safely expand rail service to the Niagara peninsula with responsible infrastructure upgrades.

Also, the possibility of light-rail transit for the Hamilton area: There are three options currently on the table that are being reviewed. I happen to favour—and I don't favour it just because it's the most expensive; I favour it because it's the most interesting, most useful and the one that will bring the most added value to our city—the full light-rail transit system.

Under the MoveOntario 2020 project, my riding will benefit from east-west rapid transit on King and Main Streets from Eastgate Mall to McMaster, as well as north-south rapid transit on James and Upper James from Rymal Road to King Street. Further, bus rapid transit and light-rail transit are being considered, as I just mentioned.

The recent economic situation in Ontario and all around the world has forced us from time to time to rethink and revisit projects, to do them more economically and to make sure that there are economies of value and economies of scale there. An important consideration there, of course, is population growth and patterns. I believe that this resolution will help us to determine priorities in light of certain changes that are taking place across Ontario.

I want to thank my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville for his initiative today. I think it sends a clear message to all supporters of GO Transit and to our valuable partners at Metrolinx as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to all of my colleagues in the House, and I deeply appreciate this opportunity to support the member from Mississauga–Streetsville's resolution.

What we are talking about here is a very simple resolution that basically says, "Show me what you got." Quite frankly, I want to thank him for bringing that forward because it's always good to take a step back and take a look at what it is we've got, where we are headed, and to allow the members who are affected by this particular project to have a grasp and an understanding of where they are headed and what they are planning to do so they can have some input. To the member, thank you.

The second person I thank is the Minister of Transportation, who has been listening carefully to the debate and digesting what is being said. Her presence indicates a deep concern and a consideration of the debate that has been put forward by all members of the House, and they made some good points right across the board.

Finally, I wanted to make sure there is an understanding that GO service is something that my community has been working on. The chamber of commerce in a committee, with their subcommittee, and with the city committee in the city of Brantford, the county of Brant, myself—we've been working with officials to see if we can expand the service to help us with public transit.

Speaker, I thank you very much for this opportunity and I wish the member—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate? Seeing none, the honourable member for

Mississauga—Streetsville has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I acknowledge the contributions of those who spoke to my resolution.

To the member for Newmarket—Aurora, I certainly take his point that our relationship as decision-makers and as riders should be a cooperative and productive one with our local transit providers. In fact, we in Mississauga have enjoyed a professional and cordial relationship with GO Transit. Wherever Metrolinx similarly looks upon us as allies and as partners, we will be far more productive than a relationship in any other way based.

To the member for Oakville, he notes that our GTA communities, nearly two dozen of them in total, are stitched together by the people who need to live and to work in them. He also notes that people tend to move in before the facilities are available and we really need Metrolinx to get out in front of growth rather than to run after it and catch up.

I really enjoyed the comments from my colleague from Timmins—James Bay. We all know that if we didn't have an entity like Metrolinx we'd probably have to create something that does what it does. You mention a number of points that I thought were particularly good.

I also want to note that, to those of us who live in those high-growth communities, whether it be diesel or electric, the point to us is capacity, not the fuel that the train runs on. Indeed, GO's new MP40 locomotives are clean, quiet and fuel efficient.

The member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale noted what is obvious: Commuters will get out of their cars as long as they've got a good transit system. In fact, commuting is very stressful. I, like many other GO riders, tend to get a nice, quiet snooze on the train and I arrive refreshed for it.

I especially want to acknowledge my colleague from Brant, and I want to thank the four Ministers of Transportation that I've worked with and acknowledge our ongoing productive relationship with GO.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. We'll vote on Mr. Delaney's ballot item in just a little over 50 minutes' time.

SPORTS FUNDING

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario believes the government of Ontario should develop a strategy, along with local and national sports organizations, to ensure Ontario athletes win and succeed, and compete in the finest and most honourable traditions of Canadian sport, when Ontario hosts the 2015 Pan Am Games.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to start off by thanking two ministers who are present and who are

going to speak to this resolution as well: Minister Best, the Minister of Health Promotion, and Minister Fonseca, the Minister of Labour. They will have some comments to make later on in this hour or so that we have.

I think we'll start by going back to that day not too long ago when—I think it was on a Sunday a few weeks ago—Sidney Crosby manoeuvred and scored a goal that everyone in Canada will remember forever. That feeling and that memory are seared into the Canadian consciousness for many, many years, perhaps for all of our lifetimes.

Those are very rare moments, when something like that can happen. A lot of it happened because Canada had decided, prior to the Olympics, to put special emphasis on working with the athletes so that they would have the opportunity to train and use the best coaching and the best facilities, so that we would win as many medals as possible. I don't think anybody in Canada, any person, would be upset with the results of how Canada performed in the last Winter Olympics.

We won more gold medals than any other country that has hosted the Olympic Games. In most other countries in the world where they list the medal standings—for example, in Great Britain—Canada came in first because the gold medal count counts for more than the entire medal count. So even though the United States did get more medals than Canada, we were seen—Canada was seen—as having achieved first place in the Olympics by winning the most gold medals.

Interjection.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: That magic number—15, I'm reminded by one of my colleagues here—is something that no other host country has ever achieved—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It was 14.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm sorry; it was 14. That was the most that was ever achieved.

Interjection: Next time.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Perhaps next time, it will be more than 14; 15, or maybe even more.

I think that the same sense of happiness and joy occurred on November 6, 2009, when Toronto was successful in winning the bid to host the 17th Pan Am Games. Canadians erupted in joy in Mexico, where the announcement was made, as well as here, when we were named—Toronto was named—as the host city for these upcoming Pan Am Games. Premier McGuinty said in Mexico, "Our commitment, our pledge, our undertaking, our promise is to provide you with the best Pan Am Games ever." I believe he meant every word he said, then and now.

The 17th Pan American Games will take place in Ontario from July 10, 2015 until July 26th, 2015. Hosting these games is a huge undertaking for any country, much less a province. We are up to the challenge because we will deliver as we promised. You see, we will be hosting some 40-plus countries from the hemisphere, with athletes from three North American nations, seven Central American nations, 12 South American nations and 20 Caribbean nations. Our province is already home to thousands who have their roots in those regions.

1530

The McGuinty government is committed to excellence in sports for all Ontarians. This resolution beckons our government to develop a strategy in concert with local and national sports organizations to ensure that Ontario athletes win and succeed in the finest traditions of Canadian sports at the 2015 Pan Am Games. Our government's commitment manifests itself in the investments already made and investments yet to come.

Let me state for the record that the McGuinty government's support for amateur sports increased by a whopping 156% between 2003 and 2009, and since 2006, investments in programs totalled some \$42 million. Our government has provided some \$23.1 million in 2009-10 to provincial sports and multi-sport organizations and other partners which promote participation and excellence in sports throughout our province. In 2009-10, the McGuinty government's renewed commitment to the Quest for Gold program was to the tune of \$10 million.

Very briefly, I want to speak about Quest for Gold. The Quest for Gold program was established to provide additional support to athletes from Ontario and to increase the performance and number of Ontario athletes competing at the highest levels nationally and internationally, thereby contributing to the improved performance of Canada at international competitions such as the upcoming Pan Am Games. The objective of the program is to help athletes continue to pursue athletic excellence at the very highest levels; to encourage athletes to stay in Ontario to train and also to go to school; to provide compensation for earnings lost while they are training to enable athletes to successfully pursue excellence in sports; and to increase access to high-performance coaching as well as to facilities that are available. The more you have access to good coaching and good facilities, the more likely you are to compete and perhaps win a medal or finish near the top of the list in whatever sport you participate in.

Our Minister of Health Promotion, the Honourable Margaret Best, underscored the importance of amateur sports when she stated, "The McGuinty government is committed to supporting Ontario athletes—our role models. Our athletes' commitment to excellence inspires all of us to lead healthy, active lives. Ontario's Quest for Gold program ensures that our athletes have every opportunity to reach their full potential." I hope that I quoted her correctly there.

Let me share what a couple of our 2010 Olympians said about the Quest for Gold program. Vanessa Crone and Paul Poirier said, "Thanks to Quest for Gold, we are able to focus on training and improving our abilities, and ultimately, achieving our best at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics." This is from the athletes themselves; no political grandstanding was required here. This is what investing in our athletes means to the athletes, to the image of our province and to our country. Athletes recognize that with huge investments in sports, there is greater opportunity to compete, to train, to perform and, yes, opportunity for high performance to showcase our

province. That is what the Quest for Gold means to our athletes. They are the new role models, and the younger athletes emulate them in our own communities. We all know younger children, nephews, nieces, cousins and others who look up to these athletes and consider them to be their heroes.

Quest for Gold has so far benefited some 8,000 Ontario athletes. The McGuinty government has had a remarkable record of funding amateur sports in this province.

In the Road to Excellence program, the government invested an additional \$701,000 that helped Canada's summer athletes to finish in the top 14 in total standings in the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics.

Let me state for the record that 85% of eligible Ontario athletes who compete in the Olympics are Quest for Gold recipients. We have seen the 2008 Beijing Olympics and Paralympics; 131 of the 180 athletes on Team Canada, again, were Quest for Gold recipients, and 23 of those athletes won medals. That calls for celebration and for recognition.

If we do not invest in our athletes, then we have no reason to celebrate or be joyous. But because our government is committed to funding amateur sport, we are on the road to making history once again at the 2015 Pan Am Games.

The success of our government's funding also hinges on its willingness to partner with the federal and municipal levels of government and the private sector. This inclusive approach is what defines the McGuinty government and strengthens our democracy.

Let me speak a little bit about what hosting the Pan Am Games means to Toronto. The benefits are enormous, for they will:

- bring over 10,000 athletes and officials to the city;
- bring more than 250,000 tourists, who will occupy hotels, eat at restaurants, shop and visit places of attraction;
- generate about 15,000 jobs;
- showcase Ontario and Canada to the world;
- have a ripple effect by stimulating other projects; and
- create a legacy of affordable housing and sports infrastructure, with \$700 million in investment in upgrading existing facilities and building new ones, including an aquatics centre, an athletic stadium and a velodrome.

For those that don't know, a velodrome—I only see them during the Olympics and during certain competitions—is an indoor arena where bike racers compete. In Canada, there presently is not a velodrome. This will be the first one built.

I'm sure that by having one here in Ontario, our athletes will be able to train and compete at the very highest level. The ripple-down effect is that young people, instead of spending time doing other things—perhaps saying, "I'm going to the mall," or "I'm going to go out with my friends"—will be able to say, "You know what? I'm spending the next few hours with my coach at the velodrome trying to be a better cyclist, so that when I

compete in a future competition, I have a chance of achieving a medal.”

There is so much that happens when we decide to participate in something of this nature. I think it's important to note that not only Toronto will benefit; a lot of these activities will take place in different venues outside Toronto. They're spread all over to the Golden Horseshoe area as well as in some areas east of Toronto.

At the community level, the economic impact and job creation benefit will be phenomenal. We're looking at 15,000 new jobs in the province, mainly in the construction, tourism and event support sectors. As I said, the games will bring approximately 10,000 athletes and officials and about 250,000 tourists.

In concluding my opening remarks, I simply want to say that I think that hosting these games is a tremendous opportunity for Ontario, for Toronto, for the GTA and for all Canadians to really showcase what we are able to do, not only for ourselves but for our athletes, and to show the rest of the world how Toronto and Ontario can put on the best Pan Am Games that have ever been seen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to join the debate today on this private member's resolution. Basically, the resolution states that Ontario should develop a strategy, along with local and national sports organizations, to ensure Ontario athletes win and succeed, and compete in the finest and most honourable traditions of Canadian sport, when Ontario hosts the 2015 Pan Am Games. I certainly support the resolution.

I think this has probably come about, in part, from the recent Olympics. I think the great majority of Canadians felt a great amount of pride at the way the Olympics were carried on and the success of our athletes. We heard a lot, watching the commentary—I certainly watched most evenings when I had an opportunity—about the Own the Podium program, and it seems to me that it was a great success. We had a record number of gold medals, and more gold medals than any other country. It's quite an accomplishment for a country with a population the size of Canada's.

Of course, there were a lot of volunteers involved with the Olympics as well. In fact, I know at least a couple of people—I'm sure there were more—from the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka who went out for a month or so to help out. Ted Yard, from Bracebridge, a former downhill ski racer himself, went out and helped with the downhill ski racing.

Kristy Mulligan, also of Bracebridge, was, I believe, also helping out on the slide rides, the luge and that sort of thing. Volunteers are critical for a big event like that. They'll be critical for the Pan Am Games.

1540

Just recently, we had our own Olympics in the Parry Sound–Muskoka area that we hosted, the Ontario Winter Games. As I mentioned previously when I had a chance to, the committee was very successful: Scott Aitchison, Myke Malone, their committee, all the volunteers—some

1,000 volunteers—involved in making that successful. Of course, I would like to highlight the athletes from Parry Sound–Muskoka that were participating in those games. We had Natalia Hawthorn of Bracebridge, who got two silver medals in those Ontario Winter Games. She's a cross-country skier and she competed in the 700-metre free sprint and the juvenile girls' 7.5-kilometre classic cross-country ski race. That was held in beautiful Arrowhead Provincial Park in Huntsville. But also from the Arrowhead Nordic Ski Club were Monique Derbyshire, Cam Raynor, Ben Osorio, Brady Irving, Ryan Atwood and Robyn Klinkman, who all competed.

We also had other Parry Sound–Muskoka athletes, residents of Port Sydney: Elora Austrup, who's 11, in gymnastics; Jacob Cryderman, 17, in figure skating; boxers Bryan Black, 15, of Bracebridge, Bala's own Caleb Luksa, 15, and Lee Tombs, 16, competing; and also the Bracebridge Knight Hawks badminton club: McLean Brownlee, Mara Goodyear, Adam Ager and Bruce Burdett. From the Huntsville Judo Club, there was Sarah Malcolm, who's 14, of Burk's Falls, competing. So, lots of local athletes competing.

Of course, also from the area we recently had Bryce Davison, who's from Huntsville, and his partner Jessica Dubé of Drummondville, Quebec, who were the Canadian pairs champions three out of the last four years, and they competed in the Olympics and came sixth.

I'm always pleased to highlight some local athletes, but really the bigger question, I say, is: What is the greater benefit of athletics and of really elite athletics? The benefit is that it encourages us average folks to lead more active lifestyles and to get involved in sports. That is the greater good, because I think it's fair to say that we have health problems in Canada, in Ontario and North America. We have a problem with obesity with young people not being active enough. If they see some people doing very well in athletics, hopefully that encourages them to get involved.

I would like to point out that government has had some recent policies which work against getting people involved in athletics. Specifically, they exempted the HST—the new tax is coming into effect July 1—on meals under \$4. That tends to be convenience food, fast food, which in many cases is junk food, which tends to be not the most healthy food in many cases. They have not exempted the HST on gym memberships, on sports club memberships, on many of the fees for sports, so they are adding costs, making it more difficult for families to afford to participate in sports.

What else can be done? I think mandatory gym classes in public school, high school, is a positive way, especially if you have some really leading phys-ed teachers who encourage you and get you involved. I know in my case, I had Lenny McQueen and others, who were very encouraging.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: They worked with what they had.

I think there are also other things that the provincial government should be doing to make it easier for people

who want to get exercise to be able to get exercise. I know in our area, Parry Sound–Muskoka, which is a tourism area, everybody wants to get riding their bicycle, especially in the rural areas, or walking. In many cases the secondary highway has just got the paved part and the gravel shoulder—no place for a bicycle. I would love to see the government make it a policy that whenever they pave a secondary highway, like 118, for example, they add a three- or four-foot strip, which is there in some cases. That allows people to more safely cycle along those secondary highways, which are not super-busy highways. I've seen around my riding, in places where the shoulder is paved they are used tremendously, and I know that people are wanting to get out and make use of that. So those are a few simple things that can be done.

I know we have a couple of other members who would like to speak to this, so I will wrap up and just say that I will be supporting it. I believe that we need to do whatever we can to encourage people of all ages to be as active as possible to improve their quality of life and make them healthier. Of course, there are big benefits in terms of costs to the health system, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Applause.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Please. It's okay.

I'm happy to speak to this motion. I support the comments made by the member from Scarborough Southwest. In fact, I agree with everything that he said. Then I want to get to the motion, because I thought you were going to speak about what the motion entails by way of what you want the government to do in addition to what you expressed, which I agree with. But I don't think you articulated that, and you might want to do that in your two minutes.

I'm a big fan of the Olympic Games; I really am. The only game I play is soccer. I'm not exceptional, but I am a big fan of soccer, and every time the World Cup comes, I'm there. I watch as many games as I can, because I just love the game. I played some hockey when I was a young man. I'm not great at it. My son is much better than I am. I love to see it every now and then, but I have to admit, I'm not going to spend a couple of hours watching hockey. I'm not going to do it. But it's a great game. I play tennis, and I realize when I play—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You can fake taking a dive better than anybody.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, I don't fake dives too well, because I don't know how to swim—so diving is a very difficult thing for me. I'm not into that one, no. So I couldn't fake a dive in the water, because I stay away from it.

I love a whole lot of games, including tennis, which I played. Only in playing tennis did I realize how difficult the game is. The only game I haven't gotten into is golf, because I just can't get my heart into that. I just could never get it. I swung that—what do you call it, Frank?

Mr. Frank Klees: It's called a club.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A club—once. That was it. I swung it once, and then I dropped the club. I said, "This

is for somebody else, not for me." I just couldn't do it. But every sport has its complexity. I realize that, and I appreciate it. It's just that I like some games more than others. But when the Olympic Games are on, I watch as much as I can, because I marvel at the skills people have to be able to do what they do. I find a whole lot of those sports dangerous—I just don't know how they do it—and when they succeed at doing what they do, I say, "God bless."

I think about the sacrifices families make to be able to get their children at the stage they are when they get to the Olympics, because it takes a great deal of sacrifice, usually from two parents—sometimes just one, but usually it takes two parents, and the sacrifices are immense. God bless their commitment.

I also believe in the magic of sports, I really do, and the transformative power of sports. I believe in it absolutely, because I really do believe it changes a whole lot of young people in terms of what they want to do.

I marvel at the corporate world that jumps into the Olympic Games with a great deal of enthusiasm, because there's a whole lot of pecunia to be made in the Olympic Games, and the corporate world is right there every time the Olympic Games are on. I wish the corporate world would jump into other areas of human interest, such as worry about the health care system; worry about the little things, like education; worry about the little things, like child care; worry about the little things, the supports we give to our seniors who really can't afford to look after their own—if only the corporate world could jump in with both feet to support these other great, transformative things that we do in society. I wish they could be there for that, as well. Alas, they're not. I felt compelled to say that, because they don't jump in with enthusiasm in these other areas. In fact, they're the first in line saying, "Cut, cut some more." And when we talk about the Olympics, they say, "Yeah, spend some more, and we're there with you." I just wanted to say that.

1550

I know that the member from Scarborough Southwest talked about the Ontario Quest for Gold, which is a good thing. He explained what it does, how it helps the athletes, encourages them to stay in Ontario, compensates athletes for earnings lost while training, and all that is good.

I think he talked about other things as well. I don't remember whether he mentioned the fact that the Ontario-card athletes are selected and nominated by the provincial/multi-sport organization, which is a good thing. Clearly, the Quest for Gold received \$10 million from the government; the member from Scarborough Southwest mentioned that. That's good. That increases the number to \$40 million. That's fine. There is enhanced coaching funding that is provided, which I'm not sure you mentioned, but that's part of the deal, and all of that is good. So I was reflecting: Is the member from Scarborough Southwest saying that's not enough? Is he suggesting we might want to spend a little more in order to achieve the kinds of things you were talking about? If

that's what it is that he wants to say in his two minutes, I want to support it, because I think he's on the right track.

I suspect that in order to get success at the Pan/Parapan American Games, we're going to have to invest a few dollars. I wish the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health Promotion would invest a little more in physical education in our classrooms. The former minister knows that only 34% of our classrooms have physical education teachers. Maybe the member from Scarborough Southwest might say, "There's an idea. I might talk to the Minister of Education"—the current one—"and say to her that we should invest a little on physical education teachers." We want to be able to deal not just with obesity, which is a huge, huge problem, but we also want to engage young people and get them involved in sports, because of the transformative power that it has.

I know that our sports critic, Paul Miller, has met with True Sport, which is a social movement powered by people who believe that sports can transform lives and communities, if it's done right. True Sport members across Canada are committed to community sports that are healthy, fair, inclusive and fun. This group stands together against cheating, bullying, aggressive parental behaviour and win-at-all-costs kind of thinking. That is an interesting group that I suspect the Minister of Health Promotion works with on a regular basis. I suspect the member from Scarborough Southwest supports the activities of this group, and he might want to talk about that.

I want to say that some money has been given for infrastructure. We've got to be able to give money for infrastructure in order to be sure that the Pan/Parapan American Games work, and work effectively. If you don't invest in that infrastructure, it's going to be a little problemo.

Money has to go into infrastructure. I hope that the infrastructure dollars can spread, not just in terms of where the Pan/Parapan American Games are going to be, but all over Ontario. A lot of our recreation centres are in dire need of financial support. If we want to be able to help young people wherever they may be in Ontario, they need to have recreation centres that are well equipped, not crumbling, and are as up-to-date as they possibly can be. While the Minister of Health Promotion is likely to say, "We've invested a couple of million dollars," my suspicion is—yes, you began doing that last year. I suspect it's not enough in some of those local communities in Ontario that desperately are looking for that kind of support.

If we do provide enough support in those areas where there is an improvement to the current infrastructure, we then have to worry about whether those municipalities have the staff and the resources to make sure they're running. There's no point in putting and investing money in some building that was crumbling, only to discover that the municipalities simply don't have the money to make sure the buildings run efficiently and that they have the staff to provide the programming.

I say to ministers listening and to the member from Scarborough Southwest that I do not disagree with anything that he has proposed. There's certainly a lot more that we could do in terms of health promotion and in terms of what sports can do to transform lives and communities. We can do more, and we need to look at how much more needs to be done.

But, back to the motion, which reads, "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario, through the Minister of Transportation shall"—oops, sorry. That's not the motion; it's a different motion. Mr. Berardinetti's motion: "That, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario believes the government of Ontario should develop a strategy, along with local and national sports organizations, to ensure Ontario athletes win and succeed, and compete in the finest and most honourable traditions of Canadian sport, when Ontario hosts the 2015 Pan Am Games." I think we should say "Pan/Parapan American Games."

I look at the motion and I say, is there more that you're recommending? If so, what is it? Is what the government doing sufficient based on what you described from the very beginning about the Ontario Quest for Gold? Is there something lacking there or not? Do you agree with what's already there, or how do we improve it and how do we enhance it? I think that's what's missing in the motion. Otherwise, if we don't have anything new, I'm not sure what we're dealing with other than to say, I agree with what you said. It's a good thing. Let's get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: It certainly is my pleasure to rise in this House this afternoon to speak about the Pan American Games and sport in general. As Minister of Health Promotion, I am also responsible for sport.

Of course, we have seen that there have been some great times for sport in Canada. With the recent winter Olympics, it certainly has galvanized many of us—just about everyone, in fact—behind sports, and really has got us to look at how important athletes are and what an important role they play in our lives generally.

I've listened to my colleagues around the room in this Legislature today, and I certainly thank them for the very kind words they have said about sport and for their generous support, which is much appreciated. I have also heard of and am very intimately aware of the many different investments that our government has made in sport in the province. I've heard many people talk about the Quest for Gold, and there have been various other investments.

I hear the member across the aisle from Trinity—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Trinity—Spadina.

Hon. Margaret R. Best:—Trinity—Spadina. I am well aware of where you're from, sir.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's good to say.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Yes, and I heard you. You certainly are right when you say sport has the power to transform.

Interjection.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I'm listening; I've been listening to all of you. Certainly, as I've heard you say, there is more to be done. There's always more to be done. We certainly acknowledge that, but we continue to work to improve the facilities, the resources and the foundation for sport in the province of Ontario.

We are very pleased with the result that we have had with respect to the Pan/Parapan American Games. We have been very successful in bringing those games to Ontario. We look, as we move from now into 2015, to leverage the Pan/Parapan American Games to the benefit of Ontario—not just the athletes, but to whole communities across the province, because these games, as you have heard, will leave us with a great legacy of new sport and recreation infrastructure across the greater Golden Horseshoe. This certainly is going to benefit not just our high-performance athletes, but it's also going to benefit our coaches and our communities across this great province. It will also act as a catalyst for other infrastructure regeneration and new build as we move forward into 2015 and get prepared, because we are expecting that we are going to host the best games that we'll ever see anywhere. They're absolutely going to be the best Pan/Parapan American Games ever. We are prepared to host those games and we're ready to move forward to get all our partners aboard. As you have said, I've heard here as well today that we have support from federal, provincial and also from our municipal partners. We expect to engage them and to engage as many people and all the corporate world as we move forward to bring these games and to bring the best games ever.

1600

We have heard about the infrastructure. The Canadian Sports Institute of Ontario, which is going to be right in Scarborough, an area of our province that is really—this is going to be a great addition, because this is a place in Scarborough that has people from all over the world. Our residents make their homes in this very diverse part of this province, so it's fabulous to have that going there. It's going to attract so much economic activity and so much interest, and it will be there long after for many of the young people in that area and all around Ontario to come there to be able to access those resources that will be there for them.

But the Pan/Parapan American Games are not just about the infrastructure; they're also about the athletes, and we're so proud of the results our athletes have achieved on both the national and international stage. It's also about the coaches. I have talked about the athletes so much, and, of course, I have every right to be proud of our athletes because 33 Ontario Olympic athletes for the Winter Games received support from Ontario's Quest for Gold program. This is a program that saw many athletes, actually, who were gold medal winners, like Christine Nesbitt, Scott Moir and Tessa Virtue, Heather Moyse and so many more. We also saw Jennifer Botterill, who I talked about before. Of course, I proudly carry around the picture that she sent me that was autographed by her.

She's all dressed up in her hockey gear. It's wonderful to have young people like that who are such great role models for us. Kristina Groves and Shelley-Ann Brown—it's wonderful to talk about them this week, right after we just celebrated International Women's Day, because a lot of these are our young women who are such great role models for us in this province. It's just a pleasure for me to talk about them.

Also, the coaches: I not only get letters from the athletes, I get letters from the coaches. I have a letter right here on my BlackBerry from Mr. Ken Oda, who says, "I want to thank you again for the opportunity to attend the National Coaching Institute—Ontario through the Quest for Gold program."

There are so many coaches and athletes. It's such a great pleasure. I think it's wonderful that everybody is here to talk about sport today in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It's Thursday afternoon, so we are kind of lenient from the chair, but you're not allowed to read from your BlackBerry. Sorry, Minister.

Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very grateful to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak in favour of the resolution being brought forward by the member from Scarborough Southwest: that the government develop a strategy to help Ontario athletes succeed and win when the Pan American Games come to Toronto and the GTA in 2015. It's particularly important to be speaking about this right now in view of the tremendous success that's been achieved with the Winter Olympics in Vancouver—we're very, very proud of that—and the success achieved by our individual athletes. The Minister of Health Promotion was just speaking about some of the athletes who competed and won. To those who just competed and won and to those who just competed, we're incredibly proud of all of you and we're looking forward to 2015, when we have the opportunity to replicate that success.

I am a big supporter of the games coming to our area, particularly because—I'd like to take just a moment to speak about something that's going on in my riding. We are going to be a venue, actually, for some of the Parapan Games, for both basketball and tennis. They're going to be held at a facility that is about to be built in Whitby called the Abilities Centre. I know the member from Trinity-Spadina mentioned his concern about the infrastructure being built. This is a project that was started as the result of a group of volunteers coming together about eight years ago to talk about building a facility for all people with special needs, but a facility that is accessible to everybody. If you have a member in your family who has a physical special need, you can buy a health club membership so that all of your family members can attend. It will be fitted with special equipment. It's a place where everyone can go.

Over and above being a regional centre for sports, recreation and performing arts for people with special needs, it's also meant to mirror the societal inclusion we want to see happening in Ontario as we go forward. I

know that we have the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which has certain measures that are going to be implemented by 2025. That's a long way off. I know we're making some progress, but I wish we could speed that up a bit, because there are people out there who really need to have these facilities. People have been trying to respond to a lot of the community needs.

I'm pleased to say that this facility is one that has been supported by all four levels of government. We've received federal support, provincial support, support from the region of Durham and also from the town of Whitby in terms of cash and granting a long-term land lease for us to build this building. I've been involved as a volunteer director for a number of years, and we're finally coming to the point where we're going to be putting the shovel in the ground this summer. We'll have the facility built in time to be a venue for those games in 2015.

I also want to say—I'm happy to say—that there are some corporations that are big supporters of the Abilities Centre because they recognize the importance of this to the members of our community as a regional centre. We hope that this will serve as a model to be used across the province, because it's not just people in my riding who need this; it's people across the province of Ontario. We really want this to be a wonderful place for everybody to be able to come to. Being host of some of the Parapan Games in 2015 is a great way that we can do that.

At the end of the day, the other good part of this is that this facility is going to be self-sufficient, which I think is probably music to all our ears as legislators. We have a business plan that has been worked out that is going to involve donations from the public. It's also going to be, hopefully, hosting international conferences on inclusion and best practices. We don't have it exactly right in Ontario yet, I will readily admit, and we have lots of work yet to do, but I think, compared to many other countries in the world, we are really doing a very good job. We hope to be able to use some of the great technical expertise that we have here in Ontario and take that to other countries in the world.

Certainly, being one of the venues for the Parapan Games in 2015 is a really good way for us to get out and talk about the Abilities Centre and all of the services it has to offer. As we can teach other people from other countries, we can learn from the many other organizations that are already operating in Ontario, doing good work on behalf of all the people with special needs.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak about that. I know I've diverted a little bit from what the member was talking about, but I think it is a very good idea, and very good for all of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I am very proud and pleased to be able to support this resolution that's been put forward by my colleague Lorenzo Berardinetti, the MPP for Scarborough Southwest, a champion of sport, somebody who understands the importance of sport in our com-

munities. I know that we are all thrilled—we are so thrilled in this chamber and across Ontario—that we have won the Pan Am Games for 2015.

I know how excited we are because I know how excited we got watching our Olympic athletes compete in Vancouver. They did an absolutely amazing job. Those athletes did us proud. They gave us the opportunity to unleash our pride as a country, as a province, in our local communities. It was amazing. I saw kids walking down my neighbourhood high-fiving each other, singing O Canada—things that I had never seen before walking around my neighbourhood. I think we all experienced that, and we want to experience that again.

I know also, as an athlete, as somebody who had the proud privilege and opportunity to compete in the Olympic Games in 1996 for Canada, to proudly wear the maple leaf and the red and white of our country, what a feeling it is as an athlete to walk into a stadium that is multinational and to represent your country. I say that, but all those athletes who walked in, who were so proud and who received all those medals and competed to the best of their abilities, they all know, and I know, that they did not get there alone. It took family members. It took friends. It took coaches. It took managers. It took a community. It took a province. It took a country. It takes so much support. It is teamwork that gets them there.

1610

Now, this spirit that we talk about, that we all have right now, we have to capture it, hold it and take it all the way to 2015. But until we get there, there's a lot of work to do. We've heard a number of members here speak about that work. Some of that work is in supporting our athletes, and we're doing that. We're doing that through programs like Quest for Gold. We're also doing that through instilling values of sport education, of physical education, in our schools and getting those young athletes, providing them the opportunity to get to the podium, to be able to experience many of these different sports.

I understand that many athletes will never get to the level of the Pan Am Games or the Olympic Games or some of these high-performance levels in sports, but it inspires everybody to get out, to walk, to bicycle, to go play some soccer, to go for a swim, to get their kids maybe now involved in more recreational activities. I think this is so important for our province.

To do this, we do need facilities, we need infrastructure. That's why I'm delighted that in this plan, the Pan American Games, there is a great deal of infrastructure that is coming to the Golden Horseshoe from, as we heard, Whitby to Scarborough, Mississauga, St. Catharines, Hamilton, Toronto—they're all getting facilities that will be there, that will be a legacy for our kids long after 2015, but they will provide those opportunities that, for a long time, Ontario has not had.

We have a huge sport infrastructure deficit in this province. It has been talked about over and over again, but everybody coming together as a team—municipalities, provincial government, federal government, local

sport organizations, provincial and national sport organizations and corporate sponsors—we were able to come together and win these games with a common vision, a vision that we want to build an Ontario that is friendly to sport, and that we'll be able to invite the world here in 2015. All those countries that are coming from Latin America, South America, Mexico and the United States, many of the citizens that were from those countries are now living here, in the Golden Horseshoe, in the province of Ontario, and to be able to welcome them, 250,000 tourists, is just amazing for our province.

I am so glad that everybody has spoken in favour of this resolution. I want to commend MPP Berardinetti for his work, and again for being a champion for sport, for our kids and for the Pan Am Games in 2015.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Berardinetti, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to thank all today who spoke, but I want to, just quickly, in my short two minutes say that the key in answering the question earlier is that we want to develop a strategy. It's a call to arms, it's a call to involve the corporate sector, it's a call to involve others.

Look at the passion that's generated in this chamber simply by talking about the Olympics that recently occurred. Think about the passion that will happen in 2015 when athletes get involved. There's an old saying that goes as follows: "Tell me, and I forget. Show me, and I remember. Involve me, and I understand." I think everyone in this room and everyone in Canada now understands what it means to be a gold medal winner. We were all involved. We were all part of that in some way. We're all part of that winning goal of that very last moment of the Olympics when Sidney Crosby scored that goal.

The Americans were looking at us and even David Letterman, of all people, spent a great portion of his program the following night speaking about the Canadian Olympics and the fact that, secretly, he cheered for Canada because he liked the way we presented ourselves and he wanted to see Canada win gold.

I want to see, and I think everyone in this room wants to see, the same thing happen in 2015, and that involves a strategy. It can't just be done by some group or organization out there somewhere.

This resolution calls for all of us to be involved, from people who are in this chamber to organizations that are out there working with athletes, to coaches, to parents and others. Even the young pages that are here today can look forward to one day perhaps participating in games of this nature.

The Olympics are over 2,000 years old. They go back to the ancient Greek times. They were there for a reason, and they still are here for a reason. Hopefully in 2015, we'll again understand what it means to be Canadian.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

MENINGITIS AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DE LA SENSIBILISATION À LA MÉNINGITE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 1, standing in the name of Ms. Pendergast.

Ms. Pendergast has moved second reading of Bill 2, An Act to proclaim April 24 in each year as Meningitis Awareness Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Pendergast?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Social Policy, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred? So ordered.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with private members' notice of motion number 2, standing in name of Mr. Delaney. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

SPORTS FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with private members' notice of motion number 3, standing in name of Mr. Berardinetti. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, and just before I call orders of the day, why don't we thank our pages one more time as this is their last day.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I do now call orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, March 22, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1618.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
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McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Leeds–Grenville	
Vacant	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
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Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, Reza Moridi
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John Yakubowski
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Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
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Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 22 March 2010

Lundi 22 mars 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 March 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence of inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS FOR OTTAWA–WEST NEPEAN AND LEEDS–GRENVILLE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Electoral Officer and laid upon the table certificates of the by-elections in the electoral districts of Ottawa West–Nepean and Leeds–Grenville.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): I have a letter addressed to Mrs. Deborah Deller, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

"A writ of election dated the 3rd day of February, 2010, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Douglas B. Shouldice, returning officer for the electoral district of Ottawa West–Nepean, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Ottawa West–Nepean in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Jim Watson who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Ottawa West–Nepean, has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Ottawa West–Nepean on the 4th day of March, 2010, Bob Chiarelli has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 12th day of March, 2010, which is now lodged of record in my office.

"Yours sincerely,

"Greg Essensa

"Chief Electoral Officer."

An additional letter reads as follows:

"A writ of election, dated the 3rd day of February, 2010, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario and was addressed to Barbara Mills, returning officer for the electoral district of Leeds–Grenville, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Leeds–Grenville in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Robert Runciman who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Leeds–Grenville, has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 mars 2010

and held in Leeds–Grenville on the 4th day of March, 2010, Steve Clark has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election dated the 12th day of March, 2010, which is now lodged of record in my office."

It is signed, "Greg Essensa, Chief Electoral Officer," and dated March 16, 2010.

Mr. Chiarelli was escorted into the House by Mr. McGuinty and Ms. Smith.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Bob Chiarelli, member-elect for the electoral district of Ottawa West–Nepean, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Let the honourable member take his seat.

Applause.

Mr. Clark was escorted into the House by Mr. Hudak and Mr. Yakabuski.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have the honour to present to you and to the House Steve Clark, member-elect for the electoral district of Leeds–Grenville, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Let the honourable member take his seat.

Applause.

1040

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: It's my privilege today to welcome a few residents from my constituency. Linda and Stephen Morrin from Commanda are here today, and we're delighted to have them with us. As well, I believe Mary Beth Caliciuri is in the House. She is the mother of one of our new pages, Anthony Caliciuri. We welcome all of them to the House today.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to introduce the grade 5 class from Hawthorn Public School, in my constituency, to the Legislature. They should be here in the House around 11 o'clock.

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a small entourage, including my wife, Deanna, a number of folks from Leeds and Grenville and my former employer, the mayor of Leeds and the Thousand Islands, Frank Kinsella. So I'd like to welcome the group.

Mr. Robert Chiarelli: I'm very pleased to introduce my spouse, Randi Hansen, a number of my daughters and

some friends from Ottawa, particularly Howard and Anne Perron. They've been long-time supporters, and I'm very, very pleased that they could share this day with me.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very pleased to introduce the mother of one of our new pages, Ben Neilipovitz. His mother, Constance Neilipovitz, is in the public gallery. Welcome. I'm looking forward to having lunch with them today.

Mr. Dave Levac: My personal congratulations to the two newest members of this place.

I'd also like to introduce Mr. Robert Hornung, president of the Canadian Wind Energy Association. He's here along with Chairperson Gary Pundsack and other CanWEA members, including Justin Rangooni, today in the gallery. I encourage everyone to visit their reception at 5 p.m. in committee room 2 and learn about the great work that CanWEA is doing to expand our renewable energy opportunities in Ontario. Welcome to those in the gallery today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity on behalf of the member from Vaughan and page Catia Marceau to welcome her mother, Giulia Marceau, to the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

As well, on behalf of the member for Oakville and page Alexander Bowie, I welcome his mother, Janette Bowie, in the members' gallery today. Welcome, all, to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to first take the opportunity to say how delighted I am to welcome Steve Clark to the Ontario PC caucus and his wife, Deanna, and supporters to the assembly. We are proud of the hard work he is already doing on behalf of the people he serves. Welcome also, Mr. Chiarelli, back to the assembly; we served together a number of years ago.

My question is to the Minister of Energy. On March 17, regulation 66/10 was posted on e-Laws, the electronic website. Regulation 66/10 slips a new tax onto hydro bills through the back door. Interestingly, within 24 hours and one media call later, the regulation mysteriously disappeared from the e-Laws website.

Minister, what is it about your new backdoor energy tax that you're trying to hide from the general public?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Leader of the Opposition, as usual, has it completely wrong. What we're talking about here is an investment that is being made in a couple of relatively new conservation programs, programs that I know the Leader of the Opposition did not support when he was in government, nor did his government support; programs which obviously the Leader of the Opposition continues not to support; conservation programs that are

giving to consumers the opportunity to find savings in their energy bills; conservation programs that are allowing us to move from dirty coal to cleaner sources of energy; conservation programs that are very much part of our plan to ensure that we have reliable, sustainable sources of energy now and into the future. The Leader of the Opposition obviously—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members from Nepean—Carleton, Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, and Lanark: Welcome back. It's nice to hear your voices. I would like to hear your voices a little lower, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I will tell the energy minister what's wrong. What's wrong is, your backdoor energy tax is taking more money out of the wallets of seniors and hard-working Ontario families. The minister didn't even try to answer my question about why you posted the regulation one day, and then, 24 hours later, it has slipped off altogether.

The minister surely must know that Ontario families are already struggling to make ends meet. Now they're going to be paying your HST sales tax grab on hydro; they're paying your new so-called provincial benefit tax; they're going to be paying for that sweetheart Samsung deal for 20 years yet to come, and now you want to slip in this new backdoor energy tax.

Minister, I'll ask you again: Please tell us, why did you put it up one day, and then, 24 hours later, it disappeared?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, the Leader of the Opposition categorizes this completely wrong. The fact of the matter is, conservation programs have been funded through the energy base for many, many years. Many of our programs do that. What we're talking about here are two new, effective conservation programs that are working. We're talking about \$4 a year for the average consumer. But with that \$4 investment, all Ontarians benefit, because if we were to do it his way, we'd have to invest in creating more sources of energy supply, which would be a lot less cost-effective than what we're doing now. He didn't get it when he had the opportunity to be in office and to make these decisions. He doesn't get it now. The most effective way to deal with our energy supply is through conservation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the minister. Two straight questions and two dodges by the minister reading the same old talking points, refusing to answer the question about why they pulled down this backdoor energy tax within 24 hours. We'll release the regulation. We got a hold of it within those 24 hours. We'll send it out to the general public, because the minister is obviously afraid to do so.

Also, it says in that regulation that this will be a \$53-million tax grab from the pockets of hard-working

Ontario families and seniors. In fact, the original plan on your legislation was to apply it to gas companies as well.

I'll ask the minister, is your greedy energy tax grab for one year only, or do you plan on making this an annual grab from Ontario families?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, the Leader of the Opposition is categorizing this completely wrong. It is really important that we invest in conservation. It's really important for consumers who, under this plan, can save up to \$600 off their energy bill when they take part in the energy audits, when they take part in some of the retrofits—that we provide up to \$5,000 in rebates.

These are important programs that help move us out of dirty coal—which the Leader of the Opposition and his party fully support and want to keep us in—ensure that the lungs of our young people, our children and grandchildren, can be protected and preserved and ensure that we can move forward with our strategy to create new jobs, green energy jobs, which this program does. We're proud of this program. It's important that we move forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1050

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Three times I asked the minister why he pulled down that regulation within 24 hours. I asked if it was going to be an annual tax grab. He has avoided each and every one of these questions. This has all the appearance of yet another slippery and greedy tax grab from the McGuinty government. Let me ask the minister this, and hopefully we will get an answer: Why are you making utility companies do your dirty work of raising more tax revenue for something that the utility companies are not themselves delivering?

Hon. Brad Duguid: There's nothing new with utility companies where, in fact, the rate base provides support for conservation programs. That's just good public policy, to ensure that those who are benefiting from the programs are paying for them. I get it.

I understand that the Leader of the Opposition wouldn't be supportive of this, because he was never supportive of conservation when he had the opportunity. Their energy policy was a day-to-day event. It was a case of "cross our fingers and hope we can make it through our term with enough energy supply."

We're doing it differently. We're investing in green energies, we're investing in modernization of our nuclear units, and we're investing in conservation to ensure that we have a reliable and sustainable source of supply, not just to get us through our term like you tried to do but for future generations to benefit from, to ensure that we have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll tell you what we're against. We're against your plan to turn utility companies into yet

another bunch of tax collectors for another Liberal slush fund program.

The minister has no idea. Working families are struggling to make ends meet. They're going to pay your HST sales tax grab, they're going to pay for your sweetheart Samsung deal for 20 years to come, and now you're nailing them with this \$53-million backdoor tax grab.

I think the minister knows he also has the ability for gas companies, under the Energy Act, to similarly increase taxes to support the Liberal slush fund. Minister, you're obviously trying to do this with energy utilities; is it true that the gas companies are next on your list?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Clearly the Leader of the Opposition has not learned anything since his days in government. Clearly he wants to take us back to the days of dirty coal. Clearly he wants to take us back to the days when the Minister of Energy couldn't sleep at night because he had to worry about whether there was going to be a reliable supply.

We're moving away from those days. He may not have the guts, he may not have the courage to make the strong decisions we need to make today to ensure that future generations can breathe healthy air in this province, to ensure that future generations have access to good, green economic development jobs and opportunities. We have the intestinal fortitude to move forward with these policies. We will lead, and the people of Ontario recognize that this is indeed the way to go.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll tell you what we haven't learned: We've had one single answer to five straight and direct questions to the energy minister. We got the same old talking points five times in a row. You didn't tell us why you took it off the website. You didn't tell us this would be an annual tax grab, and you didn't tell us if you're going to the gas companies next.

Let me try one last time. I have a new idea for the energy minister: Instead of raising people's utility bills by another \$53 million, why don't you instead use that money that you're giving out to the HST tax collectors in the \$45,000 in severance, not for missing a single day's work? That's a better idea.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the advice of the member opposite, but let me tell you this and let's be clear: We are not going back to the days of dirty coal. No matter how much you want us to go there, we're not going to do that. We're not going to pollute the lungs and the health of young people, the next generation and generations to follow. We're making the tough decisions today, decisions that are leading the world in green energy and building—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're making the decisions today that are leading to the next generation of jobs economy, building a green energy hub here in this province that future generations are going to be able to benefit from, ensuring that we are moving to alternatives from coal. What are those alternatives? Modernization of our

nuclear units, enhancing of our conservation programs. For \$4 a year, that's what this is doing: the most economical way that we can move forward to ensure that our supply needs are met for many years—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Last weekend in Hamilton, Siemens International announced that they are going to be closing their doors in my community, and that's going to cost us 550 jobs. The Minister of Economic Development claims she was working with Siemens. My question is this: Will the government release the details of its final offer to Siemens?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Let me say first off that we were not happy with the outcome of a competitive process that saw Siemens select a different jurisdiction for an expansion of an advanced manufacturing that Ontario does very well.

In direct answer to this question, all of the jurisdictions that were involved signed a non-disclosure agreement that would not allow us to speak with a whole variety of people that we would otherwise speak with. It was conditional on signing that non-disclosure agreement that we were allowed to go forward in the bid. That is why that kind of information wouldn't be public, or, frankly, it would be in the papers by now.

We'd be happy to talk about the work that we are doing today to secure the future for Hamilton and Siemens.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Whatever the government was trying to do, it failed miserably, and that's obvious. As a result, 550 families are wondering how they're going to be putting food on the table and paying the bills.

In tough times like these, we cannot play politics with people's jobs. Why didn't anybody in the mayor's office, anybody in the economic development office or the workers themselves get a call when the government learned that Siemens could possibly be leaving my community?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: In fact, officials from my ministry did contact people from the city of Hamilton, and we were able to exact key information that was required, things like development charges, information about adjacent lands and buildings that we knew could help to bolster the case that we were making to Siemens. We spent an inordinate amount of time trying to land that bidding process.

I'm not happy with the outcome. I can tell you that we worked very hard to do that. We are working very hard now to see that Siemens will maintain the 6,000 employees that they employ here in Ontario, not just in Hamilton but across their many divisions. They are an important partner for us. We want them to stay. We think there are future opportunities in Hamilton—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Don Valley East will please retract his comment and apologize.

Mr. David Caplan: I apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Nobody is more unhappy than the 550 workers and their families who are going to be affected in Hamilton. When this McGuinty government found out that these good jobs were at risk, it could have pulled together Hamilton's economic development team, the workers and their union, and other parties to try to help to come up with a consolidated effort. Instead, they kept it to themselves, and now the jobs are gone.

On this side of the House, we've actually proposed measures to ensure that government works with local leaders, works with affected workers and their unions, and works with the companies at risk in advance, before we lose jobs. Will the government act openly with a plan to save jobs, or will they keep playing politics and failing us?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Let's be clear: There are a number of factors that were involved in the decision that landed in the southern states instead of Ontario, one of those being Buy America. Where was the NDP in our Buy America discussion—

Interjections.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: —when we had to get that clause out of American legislation? That did not help us. It did not help us in Windsor, didn't help us in Hamilton, didn't help us in Welland. So when we come to the NDP and say we need help on our industrial—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. Paul Miller: Which one? The "baloney" part? I withdraw it. I apologize.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Stand up and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, I don't need help from the armchair member from Peterborough. Apologize.

Mr. Paul Miller: I withdraw.

ENERGY RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My second question is to the Premier as well. In tough times, people want help to make life more affordable, but the McGuinty government seems determined to make life more expensive. The Premier is adding a new charge to hydro bills months before he adds a new 8% tax. What steps is he actually making to make energy conservation more affordable to the people in this province?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Energy had an opportunity a moment ago to speak to this, but maybe I can just reiterate some of the good points that he made.

The charge which my colleague is referencing, which the leader of the official opposition referenced a moment

ago, is 33 cents a month on the average bill. That cost goes to support two energy programs. One offers up to \$150 for a home energy audit—by the way, 348,000 Ontarians have already taken advantage of that particular program—and we also offer up to \$5,000 in retrofit rebates. So far, 160,000 Ontarians have taken advantage of the home retrofit rebates. This 33 cents a month on a typical bill is going to help fund those programs that Ontarians are seizing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government is only interested in green initiatives when they can lift some green from people's pockets. The government quietly ended the sales tax exemption for Energy Star appliances, another way the HST is going to whack people.

If this government is genuinely interested in helping Ontario families make the right environmental choices, why are they making it more expensive to do so?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure my honourable colleague heard what I had to say in my first answer, and I'll say it again: What we are doing, through this 33 cents a month on the typical bill, is paying for \$150 for a home energy audit and up to \$5,000 in retrofit rebates. Those two programs, providing electricity users with \$150 and then, again, up to \$5,000, are where the savings are coming from.

We're allowing homeowners to make investments that reduce their electricity bill and we're helping to pay for the changes they need to make. That's how we're helping homeowners save money when it comes to the electricity bill. I think it's pretty obvious.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What's obvious is that only one in 100 people actually take advantage of the retrofit program because they don't have the money in their pockets to be able to pay for those up-front costs. That's the reality.

Here's what everyday people in this province face: When they open their hydro bill, they're going to be paying more. If they want to make the right choices, they're going to be paying even more. It's a slap in the face to Ontarians who are trying their best to conserve.

When will this government stop nickeling and diming Ontarians who want to go green?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's exactly what we are doing: We are helping Ontarians go green by paying for some of the costs connected with that. We'll pay up to \$150 for their home energy audit and up to \$5,000 in retrofit rebates; 348,000 Ontarians have taken advantage of the home audit program and 160,000 so far have taken advantage of the home retrofit program.

I think we've got a couple of winners here when it comes to these programs. We'll keep on finding ways to support those.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, the only thing that happened

between the posting of the regulation creating the new backdoor energy tax and its disappearance from public access was that you gave a media interview on the subject. Thirty minutes after the interview, the regulation was gone, but the tax lives on.

Who ordered the regulation to be pulled and hidden from public access?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I guess my question to the member and his leader is, when was the last time you checked the website? It's there; it's there as we speak. You might just want to make sure that you've got up-to-date information before you stand up in this House and make those kinds of accusations.

The fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister. The member from Halton.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Economic Development.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know the member, in his heart of hearts, would support this program—and I know he believes that consumers deserve to have the opportunity to save, on average, 23% on their energy bill by engaging in the home energy audit program, by engaging in the retrofit program, which can provide families up to \$5,000 in rebates.

These programs are working. They're benefiting 160,000 families through the retrofit program; 348,000 people have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's typical of the way the Liberals do business. They put it up, they pull it, and they put it back up while members are being walked into the House here. That's the way they do business and that's the way they treat the public in this province as well. At 10:30 this morning, that regulation was not there.

Minister, the regulation that we retrieved from e-Laws before you pulled it contradicts what you've been telling the media. You say it's for one year, but the regulation calls for the tax to be reassessed at the end of the year. Did you order the regulation to be pulled so that the public wouldn't know about the new hidden tax, the backdoor tax, or was it just so you could take the time to get your story straight?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'll say it again: The regulation is on the site. Check. It's there.

It's funny how you talk about changing positions on things. I remember—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark will withdraw the comment he just made.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What happened to your belief when you said in this Legislature not long ago—in fact, it was February 23 of this year—that there's no question

that conservation is important? You talked about reducing your own usage in your home. You said that it's an important thing and that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

The member from Renfrew knows the rules. If he's not satisfied with the answer, following question period, he can put a late show in.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: You said, "I think that is an important thing, and I think there are some gains to be made out there today in that part of this act," and you were referring to the Green Energy Act. You supported it just a few months ago. Why are you all of a sudden opposed to conservation? Why do you want to deny your constituents the opportunity to save up to 23% on their energy bills? Why do you want to deny Ontario consumers the ability, through this conservation, to be able to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Children and their parents gathered on the lawn of the Legislature on Friday to ensure that they won't lose their child care in the coming year. Will the Premier commit to keeping those child care spaces open or does he plan to tell parents that there are going to be 7,600 less spaces for their children here in Ontario next year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague understands that she's talking about children for whom we have extended the benefits for child care, which had originally been funded by the federal government.

What I would ask my honourable colleague to do would be to join us in the overtures and the efforts that we continue to make vis-à-vis the federal government to encourage them to continue to assume that original responsibility so that we can, in fact, have the funding in place to provide the child care that I know that we all support for those children involved.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have 11,000 signatures on petitions from parents who disagree with this Premier. Parents don't want the blame game. They know that constitutionally, it is this government's—the provincial government's—responsibility to provide for child care funding. They want quality—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They want quality public child care for their children—children of all ages—that's not going to actually bankrupt them. That won't happen unless this Premier acts. Will he commit to keeping those child care spaces open or is he telling mothers and fathers across the province to quit their jobs and stay home with their kids?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague does not have to convince me about the value of good-quality, affordable child care for our families. She knows where we stand on these kinds of things broadly speaking because we're moving ahead with a new \$1.5-billion program to provide full-day learning opportunities for our four- and five-year-olds—the first program of its kind in North America.

Again, my colleague is referencing spaces that were originally funded by the federal government. We stepped in to extend that funding because it was about to run out. Again, I call upon my colleague to join us in the efforts that we are making to convince the federal government that they should restore that funding on a permanent basis.

1110

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Robert Chiarelli: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, my constituency of Ottawa West–Nepean is home to one of the largest senior populations in Canada. These seniors have faith, as I do, in our system of public health care. But over the last four or five weeks they have seen and heard mixed reports about hospital budgets and service cut-backs, particularly at our community hospital of Queensway Carleton. Many of these seniors are concerned, even though the hospital has an impeccable record of patient care and financial management.

Minister, can you give assurances that the level of patient care will continue at the Queensway Carleton Hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the honourable member very much for his question. I welcome him back and I congratulate him on his victory.

The first thing I want to say is that our government is absolutely committed to providing quality health care for all Ontarians within this province. In stark contrast, the first thing the previous government did when they were elected was cut funding to Ottawa hospitals by \$57 million. They shut the Grace Hospital, they shut the Riverside Hospital, they tried to close Montfort and they tried to close the pediatric cardiac program at CHEO.

In contrast, our investments at Queensway—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

In contrast, our record is clear. We've increased funding to Queensway Carleton by almost 60%. Our wait times have come down dramatically. Knee surgery is down by 440 days; hip surgery is down by 188 days—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Chiarelli: That is good news about the Queensway Carleton Hospital in Ottawa.

Last year, about 65,000 new cases of cancer were diagnosed in Ontario. Specialized care and short wait times are absolutely essential. The \$35-million Care

Grows West campaign in Ottawa supports expanded cancer care at the Queensway Carleton. The campaign chair, philanthropist Dan Greenberg, and his family donated an incredible \$11 million to this campaign, knowing the urgency of increased cancer care in our community.

Could the minister please tell this House how the government is providing advanced-level cancer care for patients at the Queensway Carleton Hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can tell you that our government has worked very hard to ensure that Ontarians who are fighting cancer get the care they need as quickly as possible, as close to home as possible. To help achieve that goal we've invested \$82.5 million for the construction of the Irving Greenberg Family Cancer Centre at Queensway Carleton Hospital.

This centre will help reduce wait times and provide personalized care for an additional 1,300 cancer patients each year. It will focus on breast, prostate and colorectal cancer—three of the most frequently diagnosed forms of cancer in Ontario. This new centre will create 60 new clinical jobs that will start serving patients in early April. It will house three radiation treatment machines, two clinics and 33 chemotherapy spaces.

This centre is a very important part in ensuring that Ontarians fighting cancer—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY RATES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Energy. The McGuinty Liberals have to be hearing the same thing that we are in the opposition about the HST and how it's just a \$3-billion tax grab. It can't be easy for them to travel the province trying to sell a tax hike of 8% more on home heating, on gas, on haircuts, on autism therapy, especially since it makes things a lot harder for Ontario families.

At the end of last week the Premier just made things a lot harder for Ontario families by signing a regulation that slips a massive \$53-million tax on energy bills. So we have a question for you: Is that why morale over there is lower than a gutter snake on a backcountry road, or is that why George Smitherman was gang-tackled, or is it both?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's obvious to me that the Conservatives never got it when they were in power, they still don't get it. The fact is—and don't take our word for it. Talk to energy experts around the world and they will tell you that the most efficient way to manage energy supply is through conservation. Your critic used to get it. He did in February; he obviously doesn't get it today. He's on a different learning curve than the rest of us.

The fact is that if we can reduce our overall load and if we can reduce our overall maintenance of the system, we're saving all Ontarians dollars. This is smart investment. It's something that will ensure that all families will have an opportunity to find savings on their energy bill through conservation. It just makes sense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: While that minister plays hide-and-go-seek with taxes, our critic has been hard at work on the energy file and energy conservation. At no time did he ever suggest that we shouldn't be conserving, and that's something that he needs to clarify in his supplementary response.

There was no news release last week to announce the \$53-million tax grab through the back door. In fact, last week, after the throne speech when we asked them what they were going to tax, what was the new surprise, they didn't respond. In his lecture on the HST to the Stratford and Area Builders' Association on the day that the regulation was posted and in his speech today to Toronto business people, there was no mention by the revenue minister that there was going to be another surprise back-door tax that wasn't mentioned in the throne speech. That is this \$53 million.

We want to know: Was the regulation pulled because they didn't tell their caucus about this secret deal?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member should know that conservation programs have been paid for by the rate base for a very long period of time. The majority of conservation programs that have gone forward are paid for by the rate base because in the end, they're paid for by the very people who are going to accrue the savings by taking advantage of those programs.

This is just good public policy. It ensures that families have the opportunity to engage in these very important programs. It ensures that we're making the most cost-effective investment we possibly can to deal with our energy-supply challenges. These are decisions that the party opposite failed to make when they were in power. These are challenging times; these are challenging decisions. But at the end of the day, we're building a system that's reliable, we're building a system that's sustainable and we're building a system that's affordable to consumers. That's what Ontarians expect—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I have repeatedly asked for assurances that this government would not cut the special diet supplement from Ontario Works and ODSP recipients who need it. I have received no such assurance from this minister. The public is worried. The editorial pages across Ontario are warning us that cutting the special diet supplement is wrong-headed, cruel and will deepen the poverty of people with diabetes, heart disease and other illnesses.

Again, will this minister tell the House today that the McGuinty government will not cut the special diet allowance?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I guess that you will have to wait until Thursday to see what will be in the budget. But one thing I can say is that this government has been

addressing poverty since we have been elected. Since 2003, we have increased social assistance by 11%. We have created a cabinet on poverty and we are working to help reduce poverty in Ontario. We have invested in the Ontario child benefit—\$1,100 right now, and by 2013 it's going to be \$1,310. We also have a low-income dental plan in place and we have more affordable housing. In the supplementary, I will continue to let you know what we have done to reduce poverty.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Again the minister refuses to answer a very simple question and a very important one. I asked this question on behalf of the tens of thousands of Ontarians who depend on this supplement to try to purchase healthy food to address their medical needs. I also speak for the countless people and organizations who care deeply about the elimination of poverty, people like Doris Grinspun of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, who says, "Cutting the special diet allowance program would be catastrophic for individuals and families in the short term and increase costs to the health care system in the long term."

Has the Social Assistance Review Committee recommended this drastic action, or is the government taking this action unilaterally?

1120

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, I will say to the member that you have to wait until Thursday to see what will be in the budget.

Special diet has been a concern of ours. When we came into power, this special diet budget was around \$6 million. Today, it's over \$200 million. So we have to look into it. We have the Auditor General who wrote a very critical report about special diet, and we are looking into it. We'll have to wait until Thursday to see what will be in the budget or not.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Earlier this month, the minister, along with the Ontario Power Authority, announced a series of contracts, mostly solar, under the feed-in tariff program of our Green Energy Act. I understand that a major participant in this first round of programs is Loblaws, which truly demonstrates the wide-ranging support and interest that we are receiving across the province.

With such great demand to participate in this program, I know there surely must be some difficulty in ensuring as many communities have the opportunity to participate. Would the minister share with this House the distribution of contracts across the province and specifically what projects are in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm very pleased to respond to the member's question. Indeed, he is right. A couple of weeks ago we made a very important announcement, and it was terrific to see the widespread take-up and support for this important program. We announced that over 500

projects in 120 communities will be receiving contracts under the feed-in tariff program. We're talking about farmers; we're talking about schools; we're talking about hospitals; we're talking about large-scale retail and commercial operations. All kinds of individuals and businesses across the province are engaging in this green energy revolution. I think I can call it that. These projects, in total, will produce enough energy to power 13,000 homes.

In the member's riding specifically, there are four projects—three hydro, one solar—that are receiving contracts. These together will generate about 765 kilowatts of energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: With the Green Energy Act and initiatives such as the closing of coal-fired plants, the government has demonstrated a commitment to becoming a North American leader in green energy. We all benefit from better, cleaner air, and we are at the forefront of a growing industry.

Wind energy has been a topic of considerable discussion. As a matter of fact, I have the largest wind farm in Canada at Prince township in my constituency. I know that the Canadian Wind Energy Association is here today.

Residents of Algoma-Manitoulin can appreciate the drive towards generating a clean, renewable energy supply, but they also want to know that we are taking their concerns surrounding wind power seriously, and they want to know that we are making progress on getting this clean energy supply online.

Would the minister tell the House what he and his ministry are doing in taking their concerns into account—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me say first and foremost that absolutely, we take the concerns that are expressed to us very seriously. We know there's some anxiety, as there often is with new things that come forward, particularly with wind turbines. Our Green Energy Act ensures that environmental safety concerns are being addressed. I know our Minister of the Environment is very much engaged in these issues.

The fact of the matter is, there is no recognized research indicating health effects on people from wind turbines. That being said, we will be constantly monitoring the situation. As I said, I know the minister is very engaged in ensuring that that monitoring takes place. We already have stringent noise regulations in place. We've put in place very important setback requirements. But let me tell you what kind of progress we have made.

In 2003, there were just 15 megawatts generated by 10 turbines. Today there are about 700 turbines generating 12,000 megawatts. That's an 80-fold increase over—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, your recent

last-minute announcement for one-time funding to the struggling children's aid societies across Ontario left most saying the cash injection just wasn't enough. However, closer to home for me, the Halton Children's Aid Society is still saying, "Where is ours?"

Mr. John O'Toole: That was hush money.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: The Halton Children's Aid Society receives—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Durham will withdraw the comment he just made.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, please stand.

Interjection.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: However, the Halton Children's Aid Society is still saying, "Where is mine?" The Halton Children's Aid Society receives less than half the provincial average, some of the lowest per capita funding in the province.

Why hasn't the Halton Children's Aid Society received one red cent from this funding announcement?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the work that we've been doing over the past many months to bring stabilization and stability to children's aid societies across the province.

As you know, we were able to announce an additional \$26.9 million in one-time funding for some CASs to get them on more stable footing, and we did that because we continue to work very closely with all children's aid societies across the province. In fact, I know that I'll be speaking to the Halton Children's Aid Society later this week.

We are continuing to work in partnership with the commission to promote the sustainability of children's aid societies, to get better outcomes for kids and ultimately, to have a system that will be there in the long term to protect kids and to do the work that is being done every day in communities across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Again, there was no answer, Madam Minister. This is short-term money. There is no solution; it's a band-aid. All that happened here was that children's aid societies that had even less than Halton were equalized so that all children's aid societies don't have enough to do their business.

Your government provided assistance to Halton children's aid, and then you said to them, "Get the rest on your line of credit." This does nothing more than to provide that band-aid solution. They originally predicted that they would run out of money in March 2010.

As you know, cost reductions mean cutbacks in services, and in this case, to the most vulnerable children and families in Ontario. The families and children of Halton deserve better. Will you put your money where your mouth is and provide the Halton Children's Aid Society with the money they deserve to do their work?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As the member opposite would know, children's aid societies over the past num-

ber of years have received increases in funding. We continue to work with them to find a mechanism to ensure that children's aid societies are on stable footing.

Halton's CAS funding is up 32% since 2003. Halton's CAS, like all other CASs and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, knows that the work we are doing at the present time is to stabilize the system and to get us through to the end of the year so that we continue to have the conversation about the long-term, sustainable approach to children's aid societies across the province.

The commission is working and travelling across the province. Our ministry works closely with all CASs, including Halton's CAS, and we continue to ensure that no child will be at risk and that the work will be done in communities across the province. That's the work that we do every day and continue to do.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Finance. A few weeks ago, the minister said he would bring in further pension reform this session. Like the Arthurs report, pensioners have been asking for an increase in the pension benefits guarantee fund to \$2,500 a month, and in these difficult economic times all pensioners want security from stranded pension plans being wound up. They want an Ontario pension agency, but there was no mention of further pension reform in this government's throne speech.

Will there be further pension reform in the spring session and will an increase in the PBGF fund and an Ontario pension agency be included in this package?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes, there will be another piece of legislation. The member opposite is correct. Professor Arthurs, as one of 144 recommendations, recommended increasing the coverage of the PBGF, but he also recommended paying for it. He also said that we have to determine what the costs are and how much that would cost workers and employers. He was very concerned that, in anything we do, number one, we not disincite employers from offering pensions, or number two, disincite employees from contributing to those plans, so it is important that we get this right.

We will continue; as I say, we have a bill before the House now. We will be bringing forward further legislation. We will be talking with all Canadian governments about the need for overall pension reform in Canada to assure our seniors and future seniors that we'll have a brighter and better future for everyone.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I've asked the minister repeatedly to fully step up to the plate on the pensions file and bring in reforms that provide pension security for all Ontarians.

The NDP has produced an Ontario retirement plan that would provide workplace pension coverage for the 65% of Ontarians without such pension plans. When will this government introduce an increase in the pension benefits guarantee fund to \$2,500 per month for all pension plans

and introduce an Ontario pension agency like that which is now operating in Quebec to manage and grow all stranded pensions?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member references the NDP proposal, which is one of a number of proposals we've seen. I think the member would acknowledge that it would be important to decide how it's going to be paid for. I think the member and his colleagues would probably agree that we don't want to inadvertently disincite people from saving for their retirement. That is one option that's available. It's the view of this government that we need to canvass, in a very careful fashion, all of the options available.

The second point I would make is, we do believe that it is in all of our interests to have a national or a pan-Canadian response to the circumstance. We want to ensure that we incent both employers and employees to do more to prepare for people's retirements as we move forward.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In February, I attended the annual meeting of the Lambton county Farm Safety Association in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. This local organization reminded the farmers in attendance that each year, an average of 115 people are killed and at least 1,500 are hospitalized for farm-related incidents across Canada.

This past week was Canadian Agricultural Safety Week. Agricultural Safety Week reminds us how important it is to have continued improvement of our farm safety record, year after year.

I understand that the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association launched a new national three-year campaign with the theme "Plan. Farm. Safety." Minister, what kinds of initiatives are being undertaken by your ministry to raise awareness and promote farm safety here in Ontario?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you for the question. My ministry has been working with the Farm Safety Association for over 10 years. Our goal is to reduce the occurrence of workplace injuries and illnesses at Ontario farms, horticulture and landscape operations.

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week gives us the opportunity to reflect on work we have done over the years to improve our farm safety record. My ministry is providing the FSA with \$120,000 annually. In partnership with OMAFRA, the FSA is working on a number of safety initiatives this year, such as publishing articles on workplace health and safety issues in Ontario Farmer, the farm accident rescue program, and safety days, a summer camp program for over 1,800 Ontario children which focuses on farm safety.

I'm very pleased to report that farm-related incidents have been on the decline over the past—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Minister, the warm weather we experienced last week reminds us all that across Ontario, farmers will soon be hard at work in the fields preparing for another season of food production. Agricultural workers play an important role in that production.

A large number of my constituents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex are farmers and farm workers. They face dangerous hazards on the job each and every day. Unfortunately, many of these risks are associated with this type of work, especially when farmers and farm workers are faced with the pressures of unfavourable weather conditions and time constraints. I'd like to know, Minister, if you can tell us what our government is doing to improve the health and safety of agricultural workers.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I would ask to refer this to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First, I would like to thank the member for the question, and I'd like to thank the minister for her continued support of agricultural workers.

In June 2006, my ministry extended the Occupational Health and Safety Act to cover farming operations, and since then, farm workers have shared the same rights as the rest of the province's workers. Furthermore, farming operations are now fully integrated in the ministry when it comes to the health and safety programs that we offer. My ministry has approximately 100 inspectors who are specially trained in issues specific to agricultural operations, and we've doubled the number of farm inspections over the last number of years. All of this has led to stronger protections for our agricultural workers.

My ministry will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, as well—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to ask my first question as member of provincial Parliament for Leeds-Grenville.

My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, a lack of proper funding at the Brockville General Hospital in my riding has meant the elimination of 15 acute care beds and 17 staff positions, including front-line health care workers. My question is: Why would the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care say these cuts were justified?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me start by congratulating the member on his victory and welcoming him to this very special place.

Since we were elected, we've made significant investments in health care. We've increased hospital funding from almost \$11 billion to \$15.5 billion; that's a 42% increase in hospital funding alone since we took office. This year alone, it's a 4.7% increase to hospitals.

However, hospitals are aware that that rate of funding increase simply will not be able to continue this year.

They are working very hard with the LHINs to come up with plans so that they can continue to improve health care as they make sure that every dollar they spend goes to better patient care.

When it comes to Brockville, I'll be happy to talk about that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: At the same time that the cuts were being announced at the Brockville General Hospital, the McGuinty government found \$3 million for the Cornwall Community Hospital. The CUPE president at Brockville said, "Our problem is we're not a Liberal riding."

During the by-election, the Liberal candidate said that he would have the health minister visit the riding within 100 days of his election. Despite the outcome, will the health minister come to Leeds and Grenville so she can see that funding the Brockville General Hospital is as important as funding Cornwall or Toronto Grace?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, and I appreciate the invitation.

I look forward to having the opportunity to talk to the member opposite about some of the improvements that we have made in his area since we were elected. In stark contrast, when his party was elected back in 1995, they cut funding to the hospital by \$5 million.

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: They can hoot and holler all they want, but I tell you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Those cuts hurt families. They cut almost 10% from the Brockville General Hospital budget.

In addition to increasing funding at the hospital, we've invested in community-based care: five family health teams in the riding of Leeds–Grenville are providing care to 40,000 patients, including 6,600 who previously did not have access to primary health care. These are important investments that we're making—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Premier. Premier, when will your government present a climate change plan that meets your promised targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: As this member well knows, we've done an awful lot with respect to climate change over the last six years. We've got the most ambitious transit plan in the province of Ontario; that's going to invest \$15 billion. We have just passed cap-and-trade legislation that will put limits on the major emitters of greenhouse gases in Ontario.

We have done an awful lot. Much more needs to be done. We want to make sure that greenhouse gas emissions are going to be reduced in the years to come, and our climate change action plan that was introduced a number of years ago is making that happen.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: In fact, the report from the minister himself showed that they're not meeting their targets, and they don't have a plan to meet their targets. In fact, after 2014, emissions rise, and they're going to miss what has to happen by a significant margin.

The question for the Premier is: When will you actually bring in a plan that gives us what you promised you'd give us? Will you keep that promise?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, we are doing something here in Ontario that no other jurisdiction in North America or indeed around the world is doing, and that is, we're closing our coal-fired energy plants. That is going to get rid of some major greenhouse gas emissions, which is absolutely necessary for us to meet those goals.

Greenhouse gas emissions and climate change in general are the issue of this decade, and the entire world needs to get together in order to get this done. We are doing our part in a number of different ways in Ontario to actually make it happen. We invite the member and his party to play along with us, work with us and make sure that we actually meet those targets as we go along.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The province is working with Ontario municipalities in the Golden Horseshoe area to make sure their official plans conform with the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe area. It's a hugely important exercise. The growth plan conformity exercise will rationalize the use of land, infrastructure and services. It will protect ecosystems and community health and ensure community sustainability. It's a very detailed and time-consuming process. Minister, what's the process behind the conformity exercise?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's an excellent question from the member for Willowdale. The Places to Grow Act, as he may know, requires municipalities that are located within the greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan area to bring their official plans into conformity. In short, an official plan describes, as I think most of us know, a municipal council's policies on how land in that community should be used.

A municipality's official plan is created by the community with input from groups and individuals within that community. This approach ensures that future planning and development will meet the specific needs of each local area. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing works closely with the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and other partner ministries to ensure effective implementation of the growth plan policies and municipal plan conformity exercises.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: A number of municipalities have already gone through the process of conforming to the 2005 provincial policy statement. Recently, you attended the Ontario Good Roads Association and ROMA conference here and said that the province will be reviewing the provincial policy statement.

Minister, how will the municipalities or the other many stakeholders who have a keen interest in this conformity process participate in the review of the provincial statement as well? I think it's an important issue for people here in Toronto, especially in Willowdale.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member is correct: I was given the opportunity to announce a five-year review at this year's Ontario Good Roads Association/ROMA conference. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved with the organization of the conference and all the municipalities and stakeholders who participated. They have all contributed to the success of the Ontario Good Roads Association/ROMA organization, and I look forward to meeting with them once again next year.

The purpose of the review is to determine whether the provincial policy statement is providing effective policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and to determine if changes are needed to those policies.

You may wish to visit my ministry's website at www.ontario.ca/mah in the near future, as there will be information—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to welcome Julia Morton-Marr, Georgina Bencsik and Melinda Rooke, along with members and students from the United Nations Association in Canada-Toronto, and the International Holistic Tourism Education Centre, who are here today, seated in the Speaker's gallery, to launch their peace and sustainability education initiatives. Welcome, all.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The changing of the seasons:

In the warmth of spring
The world comes to life
Emerging from winter's
Cold, brutal strife

Adults on patios,
Children on lawns,
Windows, be open!
Winter jackets, be gone!
But this year, it seems,
Something is missing.
Enjoyment replaced
By buzzing and hissing
Cluster flies here,
Ladybugs there.
Fragile gardens
And flowers beware!
Hornets at picnics
Ants in the kitchen
Little ones scratching
And stinging and itching
Wasps at the playground
Grubs in the field
Free to harass us
We carry no shield
And weeds that strangle
Weeds that spread
Once veggies and flowers
Now crabgrass instead.
And who do we thank
For this season gone wild?
Who welcomed the foes
Of gardener and child?
'Twas McGuinty and company
With their pesticide ban
Another decree
Without long-term plan
They ignored the good science
Rode the emotional wave
Told us how to choose
How to live and behave
Time and again,
They forbid and exclude,
Choosing for us our pets,
Our tools and our food.
And with every ban
They lose more and more votes
As more legislation
Is crammed down our throats
They don't see it now
But this controlling ambition
Will send them across
As the next opposition.

JUNIOR HOCKEY

Mr. Jeff Leal: The residents of Peterborough were very proud during the Olympic gold medal game between Canada and the United States, not just because Canada was playing, but because our community had a direct impact on the game. No less than five players and coaches were products of the Peterborough minor hockey system and the Peterborough Petes organization.

Corey Perry was born in Peterborough and played minor hockey up to Bantam AAA. This talented young man caught the eye of the Londonites and, in 2001, was drafted fifth overall to London, where he played until 2003, when he was drafted by the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim.

Chris Pronger played two seasons in Peterborough with the Petes before being drafted to the Hartford Whalers, and was named to the all-rookie team after playing his first year in the National Hockey League.

Eric Staal, born in Thunder Bay, caught the interest of the Petes organization, and was drafted by them at the age of 16. Under the excellent coaching of Dick Todd, Eric honed his skills, averaging at least a point a game during the 2001-02 season. Eric was drafted by the Carolina Hurricanes, and his NHL career took off.

Jamie Langenbrunner, who played for the United States in the gold medal game, played two seasons with the Peterborough Petes, after being drafted by the Dallas Stars straight out of high school. During those two years, he accumulated 190 points in over 124 games.

On the bench, those watching that game saw another product of the Peterborough hockey system. Steve Yzerman played two seasons for the Petes before being drafted to Detroit, where he played 22 seasons for the Wings.

There wasn't anyone who watched that gold medal game who wasn't proud of each and every player who contributed his skills and talents. For those of us watching from Peterborough, it was a very proud moment.

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to recognize that Sunday, March 21 was World Down Syndrome Day. The third month and the 21st day were chosen to signify the uniqueness of Down syndrome as the tripling of the 21st chromosome.

The annual observance of this day aims to promote awareness and understanding. The goal is also to rally support and recognition of the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with Down syndrome. Worldwide, one in every 733 babies born has Down syndrome.

Canada celebrated World Down Syndrome Day by premiering a documentary called *Tying Your Own Shoes*, which provides a glimpse into the exceptional mindsets and emotional lives of four adult artists with Down syndrome. The personal stories of Matthew, Katherine, Petra and Daninah are shared in the documentary. They include discussions on families, relationships, workplaces, experiencing loneliness, and their ambitions and desires.

The film is a humorous, heartbreaking and matter-of-fact story about the challenges and rewards of living with Down syndrome. These four individuals also recall some important childhood memories and discuss what it's like to grow up as a person with Down syndrome.

I want to thank organizations like Community Living Ontario and the Down Syndrome Association of Ontario that have made a difference in our province, dispelling

stereotypes, providing accurate information and raising awareness of the potential of individuals with Down syndrome.

MIHIR GHOSH

Mr. Michael Prue: It is with great sadness that I rise today to talk of the death of my friend Mihir Ghosh. He was more than my friend; he was, importantly for our community, an activist who embraced multiculturalism and taught us all to appreciate it.

He planned and organized every East York Day for the last 20 years, and he planned and was present at every swearing-in ceremony for new citizens that we held in our community.

He brought together people of different cultures, religions and languages. He often told the story, when they were present, of his leaving India at a young age to find fame and fortune, travelling first to Germany and later to Toronto. But it was here, he said, of all the places he ever lived, that he found a place that he could call his home.

He was the president of the East York Lions. He recently retired and went back to India to visit relatives and friends. He sent me a postcard, which I received only about 10 days ago. The next day, I received a message—the sad news that he had suddenly passed away.

To his wife, Jharna, and his children David and Anita, we send condolences, but more importantly, the knowledge that he made a profound contribution to the harmony and understanding in our community and to the Canada he so loved.

EDUCATION

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Our government understands that Ontario's prosperity depends on creating the world's most highly skilled and well-educated workforce.

We've already made a lot of progress improving our public education system. For example, class sizes are down, test scores are up and our graduation rates have increased. Now, our Open Ontario plan will help us take the next steps.

For example, we're introducing a full-day kindergarten program for four- and five-year-olds, the first of its kind in North America. This program will start our youngest students off on the right path to success.

We're opening up new opportunities in our colleges and universities. We will increase post-secondary education spaces for an additional 20,000 students this year alone.

We're also creating a new Ontario online learning institute to give Ontarians an opportunity to learn online from our best professors and teachers. And we're going to open up Ontario to 50% more foreign students, who will bring new ideas and generate more revenue that can be reinvested in our colleges and universities.

These initiatives will allow more Ontarians to receive the higher education and training they need to succeed in today's knowledge-based economy.

I am proud to support our government's Open Ontario plan.

BROCKVILLE MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Steve Clark: Just days after the by-election in Leeds–Grenville, Royal Ottawa Health Care Group CEO and president George Weber was quoted that there is a “clear impasse” hindering possible developments at the Brockville Mental Health Centre. He later said, “We need some political support to break the impasse. I am not giving up.”

1310

The proposed secure treatment centre for women can be created at the Brockville Mental Health Centre site, where 160 staff are now losing jobs due to the closing of the transitional unit. This would save the province money, improve treatment for people who need it and give a job boost to the local economy.

Earlier today, I asked the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care whether she would visit Leeds–Grenville within the next 100 days. I urge her to agree to visit Leeds–Grenville and commit to meeting with the Brockville Mental Health Centre and to support this project.

I also call on the minister to put a moratorium on the bed closures at the Brockville Mental Health Centre so that we can keep those jobs and build on the success and expertise we have on-site.

My riding of Leeds–Grenville has waited months for an answer from the Minister of Health. We’ve also been waiting over seven years for the Premier to make good on his promise for new jobs at that site.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: For the past eight years the York Regional Police, in partnership with the community, have gathered to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

March 21 was the day the Sharpeville massacre occurred. In 1960, approximately 7,500 anti-apartheid demonstrators marched peacefully to the police station in Sharpeville, South Africa, to protest a law that required all black Africans and people of colour to carry a passbook to travel within the country. During this rally, police opened fire and killed 69 demonstrators, including 10 children. In 1966, the United Nations declared March 21 a commemorative day, in memory of the Sharpeville massacre.

Collectively, we stand together against racism and all forms of discrimination while we celebrate the vibrant diversity of our communities. On April 11, 2010, the York Regional Police, under the direction of Chief La Barge, will be hosting this year’s celebration at Milliken Mills High School, themed “We Are the World,” with Ashaw Noorhasan from Rogers TV as the master of ceremonies.

I would like to thank some of the participating organizations who will be taking part in this year’s commemorative day: the Markham African Caribbean Association, Sandgate women’s shelter, the Buddhist Association of Canada, the Federation of Chinese Canadians in Markham, the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, Fuerza Latina Community Services and COSTI Immigrant Services.

MAX KEEPING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: What an incredible person I have the honour of paying tribute to today. I don’t think it’s a stretch to say that almost everybody in Ottawa knows Max Keeping well enough to consider him a friend, even if they have never met him.

There’s no doubt that he deserves every bit of this celebrity status in our community, not only for his trusted presence on Ottawa airwaves for the last 45 years or as the mainstay of CJOH News for 38 years, but as the face, voice and champion of charity and good causes in our community, from food banks to the United Way, youth sports programs and scholarships to juvenile diabetes, and of course, the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario, which has named a wing in his honour.

If that doesn’t move you, consider the numbers: Max makes more than 200 personal appearances annually on behalf of charities, service groups, fundraisers and the like—that’s on top of a full-time job.

If that doesn’t do it for you, consider this: By 2004, Max Keeping had helped raise \$100 million for good causes in eastern Ontario and western Quebec—\$100 million and counting.

Max is a member of the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario, has an Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, a Gemini Humanitarian Award, a Canadian Association of Broadcasters Gold Ribbon for outstanding community involvement, the keys to the city of Ottawa, and dozens of other awards and tributes.

As Max Keeping steps away from the news desk this Friday, he will become CJOH’s community ambassador, a fitting role for our community icon.

Max Keeping, best of luck, but most of all, thank you.

NOWRUZ

Mr. Reza Moridi: Spring arrived this year on March 20 at exactly 1:32 p.m. eastern standard time, which also marks Nowruz. Nowruz, which directly translates to “new day,” marks the first day of spring and the beginning of the calendar year in Iran and Afghanistan.

Nowruz is celebrated and observed by over 300 million people around the world. Most notably, it’s celebrated in Iran, Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and other parts of the world, including the Middle East, parts of central Asia, south Asia, northwestern China, the Crimea and some ethnic groups in Albania, Bosnia, Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia.

I am proud to inform my colleagues that Nowruz has now been recognized by the international community.

The UN General Assembly, in 2010, recognized March 21 as the International Day of Nowruz, describing it as a spring festival that has been celebrated for over 3,000 years. Nowruz was officially registered on the UNESCO list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In 2008, this House passed a motion and proclaimed the first day of spring as Nowruz in Ontario, and in 2009, the House of Commons proclaimed the first day of spring as Nowruz in Canada.

May this Nowruz bring prosperity and peace to people around the world, and freedom and democracy to the people of Iran.

Nowruz-etan peroöz.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SEPARATION DISTANCES FOR NATURAL GAS POWER PLANTS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ÉTABLISSEMENT DE DISTANCES DE SÉPARATION POUR LES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES AU GAZ NATUREL

Mr. Flynn moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to establish separation distances for natural gas power plants / Projet de loi 8, Loi établissant des distances de séparation pour les centrales électriques au gaz naturel.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm pleased to introduce this bill, which would ban the construction of natural gas power plants unless the facility is at least 1,500 metres from any land that is zoned for residential use, or any land on which an educational facility, day nursery or health care facility is located. It creates a defined separation distance between natural gas plants and communities. Ontario, then, will be able to reduce health impacts of power plant emissions such as PM_{2.5}, and will minimize the safety concerns associated with locating these facilities near homes and schools. The bill is designed to make Ontario a leader in safe energy, and I ask all members of the House to support it.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding committee membership changes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I move that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committee: on the Standing Committee on General Government, Mr. Moridi be replaced by Mr. Chiarelli, and Mr. Yakabuski be replaced by Mr. Clark.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm a bit surprised with petitions here today, but I have one from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy" and use "every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services;" health services; "veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and" last and certainly not least, "funeral arrangements;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs upwards of ... \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;
1320

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham and present it to Alexander, one of the new pages.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Save Our Child Care! Ontario Faces Dramatic Cuts to Subsidies.

"Whereas, in the 2006 budget, the McGuinty government allocated \$63.5 million for child care for each of the next four years. Each year since, \$63.5 million went to support our vital child care services;

"Whereas, if the province does not continue this funding in the 2010 provincial budget, municipalities will have no option but to make dramatic cuts to child care subsidies, destabilizing the entire system;

"Therefore, be it resolved that in the 2010 budget we call on Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan to:

"(1) Ensure the province provides sufficient funding to maintain existing levels of child care service and recognize cost-of-living and other legitimate increases in operating costs; and

"(2) Provide all necessary tools to support the transition to an early learning program, including base funding for child care programs to support operations and wages comparable to the full-day learning program, in order to ensure the child care system remains stable and sustainable."

I agree with this petition and will affix my name, and Ben will bring it down.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, sent to me courtesy of Dr. Nguyen from Eglinton Avenue in Mississauga. I especially want to thank those people from Oakville, Mississauga, Toronto and as far away as Tweed who have signed it, noting particularly Robert France and Constance Ferrell, both of Mississauga.

It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could better be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm very pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Snigdha to carry it for me on her first week in the Legislature.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the province of Ontario, through the Ontario Energy Board, has selected a location for a gas-fired

electrical generating power station within three kilometres of 16 schools and more than 11,000 homes; and

"Whereas the Oakville-Clarkson airshed is already one of the most polluted in Canada; and

"Whereas no independent environmental assessment has been completed for this proposed building location; and

"Whereas Ontario has experienced a significant reduction in demand for electrical power; and

"Whereas a recent accident at a power plant in Connecticut demonstrated the dangers that nearby residents face;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to immediately rescind the existing plan to build a power plant at or near the current planned location on ... Royal Windsor Drive in Oakville and initiate a complete review of area power needs and potential building sites, including environmental assessments and a realistic assessment of required danger zone buffer areas."

I'm pleased to sign this petition and pass it to my page, Leah. I want to just mention that there are thousands and thousands of signatures on this petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Save Our Child Care! Ontario Faces Dramatic Cuts to Subsidies.

"Whereas, in the 2006 budget, the McGuinty government allocated \$63.5 million for child care for each of the next four years. Each year since, \$63.5 million went to support our vital child care services;

"Whereas, if the province does not continue this funding in the 2010 provincial budget, municipalities will have no option but to make dramatic cuts to child care subsidies, destabilizing the entire system;

"Therefore, be it resolved that in the 2010 budget we call on Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan to:

"(1) Ensure the province provides sufficient funding to maintain existing levels of child care service and recognize cost-of-living and other legitimate increases in operating costs; and

"(2) Provide all necessary tools to support the transition to an early learning program, including base funding for child care programs to support operations and wages comparable to the full-day learning program, in order to ensure that the child care system remains stable and sustainable."

I'll send that down with Diana.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased, on behalf of my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls, to present this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, thanking Olga Alexander of Ottawa for having sent it:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by MPP Kim Craitor.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents...."

It contains a number of other specific subsections of the bill and concludes, "We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

On behalf of my seatmate from Niagara Falls, I'm pleased to sign this petition and to ask page Eric to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a number of people in my great riding of Oxford, and it is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition wholeheartedly.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise and read a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas residents in the riding of Durham do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over

\$500,000"—in fact, it actually applies to ones under \$500,000;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Ben, one of the new pages.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: This is a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I agree with that petition and will affix my signature.

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TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario's history; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: arena ice, soccer and baseball field rentals ... gas at the pumps ... home heating oil and electricity; gym fees; golf green fees; ski lift tickets; movie, theatre and ... admission fees; Internet services; cellphone bills; boat rentals, fishing licences,

charters and wood for the campfire; home renovations; and real estate transactions;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I affix my name in full support.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 11, 2010, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: In reference to the throne speech, this government's throne speech vision is so rooted in giving up control of Ontario's economy to large outside interests that it should be called "sale-a-vision."

For example, why sign on to the Harper government's buy-American deal when it will tie the hands of the provincial government and municipalities from using local tax dollars to create local jobs? Why forbid OPG to be the leader in renewable energy and then invite foreign giants like Samsung and the American giant NextEra Energy into this province? Why privatize Ontario's crown jewel corporations when it is existing provincial policy that is preventing the crown corporations from using their expertise and resources to create jobs in Ontario?

If taken to the extreme, crown asset privatization would worsen future deficits by removing the more than \$4 billion of annual revenues that crown corporations currently contribute to the provincial treasury. In exchange, as privatized enterprises, they would pay \$400 million in provincial corporate income tax and \$600 million in federal corporate income tax, leaving \$3 billion of after-tax profits for the private owners.

Ontario taxpayer money should be used to create jobs for Ontarians, processing our resources right here in Ontario. Ontario needs a comprehensive program that would ensure that, whenever it is economically feasible, provincial and municipal procurement projects give preference to Ontario- and Canadian-made products and projects. We also need a policy that insists that, whenever feasible, Ontario resources are processed here in Ontario.

An effective "local tax dollars for local jobs" program would allow smaller and mid-sized Ontario companies to achieve the scale they need to export and successfully compete in global markets, creating good-paying jobs for Ontarians. It is crucial that any "local tax dollars for local jobs" program be cost-effective and not be a burden to the taxpayer. Therefore, the price premium for Ontario-

made goods would be limited to 10% above non-Canadian products and 5% for Canadian-made goods manufactured outside of Ontario.

The harmonized sales tax, corporate tax cuts and tax giveaways to profitable banks will not—I repeat, will not—create jobs. High-wage, good-quality jobs can be created by carefully targeting financial incentives towards quality investments in plant and machinery, computer technology, new employment and skills training. New Democrats believe in creating a pro-investment tax regime, a tax regime that directly rewards job-creating investments in plant, machinery, information technology and workplace skills. The government's harmonized sales tax inputs will cost the treasury \$4.5 billion annually, and its corporate income tax reduction will cost the treasury \$2.4 billion annually. The NDP simply doesn't believe that these tax cuts are the best possible use of nearly \$7 billion per year. A more targeted use of nearly \$7 billion—in fact, far less money—would create many more jobs. In particular, the creative and timely use of tax dollars for new investment and new hiring in Ontario, as is done in Quebec, Manitoba and other provinces, is a far more effective way of creating jobs.

Additionally, Ontario must create more value-added jobs in the forestry and mining sectors. A value-added strategy in forestry would mean more jobs making hardwood flooring and doors, engineered wood products, cabinets and furniture, and less unprocessed lumber being shipped out of our province. Whenever possible, the processing of Ontario resources, particularly wood and steel, should be done in Ontario, not in outside jurisdictions.

Another issue very close to my heart: There was no mention of any government plan to expand pensions to the roughly 65% of Ontarians who presently have no workplace-based pension coverage in this province. The Harper federal budget made it clear that the federal government is not going to move to expand pension coverage. Therefore, we believe there is an important role to be played at the provincial level in greatly expanding workplace pension coverage.

The NDP believes that Ontario should move ahead with other provinces and develop a workplace-based pension plan for all working Ontarians who presently lack occupational coverage. The NDP has proposed such a plan, the Ontario retirement plan. Under our plan, every employee not enrolled in a workplace pension plan would be automatically enrolled in the ORP. But the plan is not mandatory; if you have a better way to plan for your retirement, you don't have to take part in the Ontario retirement plan.

The throne speech also made many health care promises, such as continued drug reforms, legislation to make health care providers and executives accountable for improving patient care, funding that will follow the patient and greater choice in where to access their treatment, the creation of an independent expert advisory body to provide recommendations on clinical practice guidelines, and a review of the Public Hospitals Act to

include expertise of community partners and health care professionals. But the changes the government speaks of could be profound and have a devastating impact on patients.

Ontarians are concerned that their community care is threatened. There is no justification for the government's secretive approach to health care reform. If they have a good idea, why won't they share it with Ontarians, with the experts in the field and with the opposition? What are they afraid of?

New Democrats have substantial concerns about the shift in hospital funding. We are gravely—I repeat, gravely—concerned that this government is choosing to further pursue a failed model of competitive bidding and private care, just like they did in home care and just like they have done with our P3 hospitals, which have delivered less for more public money. Ontarians need the highest quality of patient care that is available to families close to home. What will these changes mean to our families?

Drug reform is likely related to generic drug reform. Previously, Ontario capped the rebate that pharmacies could receive from drug manufacturers, as well as capping the price for generics. Currently, the price point for generic drugs is capped at 50%. The government is likely looking at lowering this cap to 25%. The government is likely looking at lowering this cap another 10% in future months. This is a contentious issue that has infuriated the pharmacy industry, broadly speaking. In general, these reforms are positive. They lower costs and do not directly impact patient care. However, the decrease in pharmacists' fees will likely have a negative impact, especially on smaller and independent pharmacies.

We really have no clue what improving provider and executive accountability may be about. The government must explain what they mean by this statement. If it is Ombudsman oversight, we applaud this move. New Democrats have repeatedly called for this fundamental shift toward transparency and accountability. A more likely scenario would signal a move toward linking health care provider and executive pay to patient care and outcomes. There have been rumours of executive bonuses tied to patient outcomes—a scary thought, Speaker.

The NDP believes in care based on quality and not profit. As we all know, the devil is in the details. The government must come out with its plan for health care provider and executive accountability sooner than later. We are gravely concerned about these issues and the possibility that we are shifting toward a competitive model of health care. Heaven help us if we go that way.

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The government has not yet released the details of its new hospital funding model, and is not expected to until the March 25 budget. What we know, so far, is that it will be related to the health-based allocation model, HBAM, launched in 2007 with the creation of the LHINs.

HBAM was supposed to take into account the health needs of a region. However, the HBAM has always been

a sorely inadequate tool that measures current use and not the true need of the population, i.e. it is terrible at taking health equity issues into account and tends to reproduce the existing issues with the health care system. It appears there will be greater pay for procedure-based funding, like the wait times strategy, and financial incentives to better-performing hospitals—I'm not quite sure how that's going to work. We would hope that they would be uniform throughout the province and they'd all provide the same care, not care based on funding.

New Democrats do not know the full plan for this new hospital funding system, because the government has been rolling it out in pieces rather than sharing its plan with stakeholders and the opposition. Ontarians do not know what is in store for them or their hospitals. This is an inexcusable way to launch a new model of hospital funding. What about transparency and consultation with the public? Where is it? I don't see a lot of it. We have grave concerns about this plan.

HBAM has proved to be a useless tool for Ontario's health care system. It does not take health equity into account, and it reproduces the problems we currently have with our health care system in terms of both under- and over-utilization of hospital services.

Procedure-based funding compartmentalizes the needs and health care issues of Ontarians. It has created a bottleneck of services in our hospitals. We want excellent patient-based care, but we need to understand the system as a whole and not just pick out the procedures and health care facilities that will garner the most support.

This system will have a devastating impact on smaller and rural hospitals, the very ones that have been hurt by the already occurring cuts, i.e. Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Burk's Falls. We do not want a health care system that picks winners and losers. We need consistent policy and planning.

New Democrats have long supported research and clinical guidelines, and perhaps the independent expert advisory panel is expected to do that. Again, this aspect is very short on details.

We all must ask: Is this just a smokescreen for introducing a series of competitive mechanisms into our system, or is this actually a move toward higher-quality care? Good question.

We need to know how any new system of clinical guidelines will fit within the existing framework. What about the existing avenues for expert advice such as the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences? This has been in existence since 1992 and is the body responsible for clinical guidelines. Why the change? What will this mean for Ontario?

New Democrats have proposed changes to the Public Hospitals Act dozens of times in the last number of years. Every time, this was rejected. So a review of the Public Hospitals Act is an interesting concept that's being brought forward. This is a vital move if we're going to take on some of the issues occurring in our hospitals. However, again, we need to see the details of this and ensure the government is actually serious about tackling these issues head-on.

Will the government finally go far enough and recognize the contributions of all health professionals and community health partners? Stakeholders such as the RNAO, ONA, Ontario midwives etc. have long asked for changes to hospital advisory committees. They have told this government time and time again that if Ontario wants to get serious about full collaboration in our hospitals, the full spectrum of health care providers must be represented on these advisory committees. There can't be hand-picked people on these boards. They have to involve all the people who work in hospitals: staff, doctors, scientists, researchers—everyone.

Will the government clarify what they will be reviewing in the PHA? We'll be looking forward to that and looking to see what they do about it. Or will this be just a quick move to ram through whatever hospital funding changes they are pursuing instead of dealing with the underlying issues? I hope not.

Poverty reduction was central to the 2007 Liberal platform. They talked about reducing poverty in our province. The 2007 throne speech stressed opportunity for all, saying that opportunity "does not mean more prosperity for some and more poverty for others." There's a little bit of a turnaround, I'd say, on that little promise. Three years later, more and more Ontarians are losing their jobs and falling into poverty or are a paycheck away from living in poverty. Ontarians, more and more, are turning to food banks in record numbers. The waiting list for affordable housing has hit record numbers. The waiting list for regulated child care is now longer than it ever was.

We are facing higher student tuitions and higher student debt than ever before. Schools are forced to fund-raise for basic supplies for elementary classes more than ever before. And what about the schools that can't afford it? What about the areas where the economy is dead and they haven't got enough to help the schools? What do those people do? They don't live in rich areas.

The volunteers for their support for poverty reduction: We'd like to thank the volunteers for their support.

To pretend that full-day learning, on its own, will magically lift children out of poverty is ridiculous. To pass the buck to the federal government on child care—where is the provincial government's action?

There's nothing on child care, nothing on affordable housing, nothing on minimum wage, nothing on income security, nothing on increases to child benefits or to social assistance. Nothing, nothing, nothing.

Clearly, the McGuinty Liberals' legacy is not going to be a bright one. According to a Toronto Star editorial, a particularly disappointing note is the absence of a progressive agenda to help Ontario's most vulnerable.

Far more must be done, including increasing access to affordable housing and daycare. The government's virtual silence on these issues suggests that increased investment is unlikely in the upcoming budget. If so, it's short-sighted. Poverty reduction was simply left off the table in the 2010 throne speech. That is unacceptable.

The government still has a year and a half left in its mandate, and its mandate clearly included a commitment to reduce poverty. Without a comprehensive set of measures, poverty won't be reduced. It's increasing day by day. It is irresponsible for the government to abandon its election promise to reduce poverty.

Our solution? Ensure fair wages for all Ontarians; increase the minimum wage to \$11 an hour and index it to inflation; invest in stronger employment standards; ensure that all Ontarians have the education and basic resources to participate in the new economy; freeze tuitions; ensure access to affordable housing; invest in good-quality affordable child care, starting with an investment of \$63 million to save the 7,600 child care spaces threatened with closure; and create more equitable, safe and inclusive communities by ensuring strong and supportive social assistance programs rather than the current punitive approach that locks up families in cycles of poverty.

Our world faces unprecedented economic, environmental and social changes ahead. We must transition to a new clean, local production economy. This will help our province, the country and the world move more efficiently. Ontario must be a leader and builder of solar panels and wind turbines, but the McGuinty Liberals' real commitment to the environment and to building a strong and green economy was sadly lacking in this throne speech.

Reiterating its promise to close coal plants means nothing on the same day as it revealed that the government paid OPG over \$400 million in 2009 to keep these plants open. I think you're kind of talking out of both sides of your mouth.

On climate change, the McGuinty government is missing its targets for greenhouse gas reduction, but there's no plan in the throne speech to address this shortfall. Neither is there an expansion of energy conservation or targets for green energy. The government's vague promise to promote the export of clean water technology rings false when it has done such a poor job in providing clean water to the First Nation communities in our own province or significantly protecting vulnerable bodies of water like Lake Ontario and the dumpsite 41 aquifer, another example. More handouts to profitable multinationals like General Electric and DuPont, with no strings attached, will not create green jobs now.

The government's willingness to allow unbridled staking of boreal forest land as a part of the Ring of Fire mining initiative also undermines confidence in the McGuinty government's commitment to protect one of the last intact original forests on our planet.

The government has allowed mining companies to stake 8,000 mining claims covering an area six times the size of the Athabasca oil sands. They should be ashamed of themselves. The McGuinty Liberals have allowed construction of a 2,000-metre airstrip and is planning for a 350-kilometre railway without consultation with the First Nation communities. The government has repeatedly promised to build a new relationship with the First

Nation communities based on consultation and inclusion. I guess what they're doing doesn't quite cut it, does it?

But the process of the Ring of Fire shows that the government is not truly committed to protecting our northern environment. It's not committed to building a new relationship with our First Nations, and it's not committed to building a green economy in the north. Some 8,000 mining claims in the Ring of Fire area, but still no land planning process or First Nations consultation: unacceptable. They show no money or commitment to an inclusive land planning process. The government is creating unnecessary conflict between First Nations and mining companies and is polluting the environment for decades to come.

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The McGuinty government must ensure that the First Nations are fully consulted on anything in the Ring of Fire and consent to all mining activities in their homelands before mining activities can continue, and adequately fund a land planning process with First Nations as lead decision-makers before proceeding any further.

Instead of giving corporate handouts for unproven technology, the government should make environmentalism affordable for struggling Ontarians, invest in proven job-intensive and green sectors, and create jobs now by making green choices affordable today.

I could go on for quite a while, but I'm going to end it. My time is almost expired.

The throne speech should have set up a strong plan to grow our economy, create jobs and employ those who lost theirs during this recession, and ensure the environmental sustainability of our province. They didn't do that. All this did was to leave many Ontarians fearing the worst: more foreign ownership of our valuable Canadian- and Ontario-owned industries and resources, and a failure to provide a decent living for our vulnerable disabled community. This will continue until this government and the government in Ottawa get a handle on our base industries and start putting more industries back into Canadian hands. If all your base industries and your forestry and mining are foreign-owned, you don't have control over your own economy.

That's where we've missed the boat. These two governments continue to sell us down the river, and that's why all those Ontarians are out of work. Until they stop that and start putting Canadian content into our lives and into our future—then we'll be all right.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Open Ontario is the theme of the speech from the throne. The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek must be one of a slender few in this province to lack faith in the ability of Ontario entrepreneurs and Ontario workers to meet the demands of our province's customers here at home and abroad. Our province and its hard-working people just don't share this member's pessimistic outlook.

The raw material of the present and the future rests on the shoulders of the eight million or so working people in

Ontario. That's why graduation rates are up across the province. Ontario is now reaping the rewards of seven years of investment in primary, secondary and post-secondary education.

Open Ontario means that young people studying ways of building value from this province's natural resources can set up and run those businesses right here in Ontario: not in Europe, not in the United States and not in South Asia.

Ontario's tax reforms and aggressive tax reductions for individuals, families and businesses will, as of mid-year, give this province a sustainable competitive advantage all across North America. There is no better place in North America to start a business, to relocate a business or to run a business than the province of Ontario. There is now no better place in North America to create a job or to have a job.

That's why independent studies have concluded that with this broad-based strategy of which this throne speech is a part, Ontario will see a net new 591,000 jobs, an estimated \$47 billion of new investment, and a rise in real incomes of about 8.8%.

Those are the cornerstones of sustainable progress. That's why Ontario's speech from the throne is a building block toward a bright and prosperous future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I always listen closely and attentively to the member from Hamilton East. He brings the real working person's point of view to it because he knows of what he speaks, coming from Hamilton.

I can only tell you this: There was nothing of any substance about jobs—a lot of promises. Up to a million jobs were promised, but what's the record? They've lost almost 150,000 jobs.

I look at my riding as another example. There was no mention of anything that was progressive.

I think they're trying to hide behind the HST. The member who replied on behalf of the Liberals with the prepared speech they gave him—I'm surprised they don't realize that the economy of Ontario is in serious trouble.

There was nothing in this throne speech on deficit reduction. There was a token-ness to come out of reform in the pension issues that are before us. There was nothing for Durham with respect to the new-build nuclear or the 407 east expansion to be completed, nothing on the GO extension east—nothing for one of the regions of this province, with 600,000 people and growing, to improve the infrastructure.

I'm surprised that the member from the Liberal side didn't listen more closely to the Hamilton East argument that my good friend put forward. I can only say to you that he was speaking about jobs and the economy. There was nothing in the throne speech. There was this new—what they called “Sell Ontario,” or “Do business with Samsung.” “Buy Korea” was their new policy that they announced.

You've got to listen closely when the government members on that side are talking. Question it seriously.

They promised they wouldn't raise taxes; then they raised them. This HST is another tax increase, and now we find out there's a new energy charge.

They could collect all the money in the world, but ask yourself: How are things working in the province of Ontario? Not very well.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member for Hamilton and the member for Durham.

For the member for Durham, I'd just like to remind him that the budget is going to be read by the finance minister in this very House—not Magna, not anywhere else that you may have preferred, but actually in the House on Thursday at 4 o'clock, and you will see set out before you the financial plan that we have for the province.

I think that our Open Ontario plan is incredibly progressive and provides some great opportunities. We're talking about a new Water Opportunities Act to take advantage of our province's expertise in clean water technology. I know I've had calls in my constituency office already asking me about the Water Opportunities Act and what we're going to be doing and how we in northern Ontario can take advantage of it.

The 20,000 more student spaces in colleges and universities are very exciting for colleges and universities in my riding, Nipissing and Canadore. I was there on Thursday, celebrating a wonderful investment by Seymour Schulich in our faculty of education. Everyone was talking about the fact that we're going to be expanding our colleges and universities. They're very excited about seeing more foreign students brought in and more opportunities for Ontario students.

The member also spoke about the Ring of Fire. As a northern member, I have to say that it's an incredibly exciting opportunity. We look forward to working with our First Nations communities and our northern communities and developing what could be the richest find of chromite in the world, a great opportunity for so many in the north, for industry, for technology and for our learning institutions as we train those who will go forward and work in this great initiative. It is an exciting opportunity that we see on the horizon, unlike the previous government that sold off the north, that put the ONTC up for sale and really didn't pay any attention to anything north of Barrie for however many years that you were in power—a long, bad time for the north.

We are very excited about the opportunities that we face in the north, and we are excited to take advantage of those opportunities.

As I said, the folks at Nipissing and Canadore are very excited about what they heard in the Open Ontario plan last week.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes this afternoon to respond to comments made by

the member from Hamilton East and to add to this debate.

I certainly know that the Open Ontario plan that we have developed is optimistic, and I take an optimistic view with regard to how this will set Ontario for the future and certainly during the next five years, unlike the pessimism that I saw and heard across the way.

I'd like to just make comments about the opportunities for expansion of businesses in Ontario. I look at the opportunities that there will be from implementing a new Water Opportunities Act. In eastern Ontario we have a business that during the past five, six years has expanded tremendously: the Thompson Rosemount Group, for example, in water resources. I just look at the opportunities that they've had in the past five, six years and the opportunities that this will give to that business in the future, that business and others who have expertise in that field.

I also want to say that I'm very pleased with regard to the opportunities that there will be here for higher education. As a retired educator, I'm always seeking opportunities to express that. I think it's wonderful that this will create 20,000 new opportunities, but it will also give St. Lawrence College in Cornwall, with its adjacent St. Lawrence River Institute of Environmental Sciences, that opportunity to look at the water situation in Ontario and the expertise that we have in those fields to cause that to be all part of the new Water Opportunities Act. I just think that we are set and we're at the stage that we will see tremendous development in this in the future. That's the optimistic view that I take with regard to the throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Durham for his kind words, and he, too, is well aware of what's going on in his community. The member from Mississauga—Streetsville, the member from Stormont—Dundas and the House leader: I would invite them to come to the city of Hamilton and talk to the 15,000 to 20,000 people in my city who have lost their jobs in the last 15 years. Our most recent victim is another big outfit—Siemens—leaving Hamilton and heading south to North Carolina because of incentives.

You can talk about clean water up north. You can talk about your Ring of Fire. You can talk about those things, but come to Hamilton if you want to see what's really going on.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: You've been there. Well, you obviously didn't keep your eyes open, because most of my city is unemployed. All the jobs have left. For an hour, I could go through a list of major companies that have left Hamilton. Because they're foreign-owned, when there's a recession or a depression in our province, they close their foreign operations, which would be Canada, and they go back to their places of origin. They don't open. I haven't had anything new open in Hamilton other than a

bakery moving from Toronto—which is okay, but they're transforming 500 jobs from Toronto to Hamilton, so it's not really helping the people of Hamilton: maybe 100 jobs. I've lost thousands and thousands.

So when this government stands up and says how great it's doing and all that, come and talk to the average guy on the street and see what he thinks you're doing and how you're doing, because certainly he isn't doing well in Hamilton and a lot of other major manufacturing centres. Because you don't have control of your base industries, they're all moving south. They're getting incentives from other countries to move there: tax-free breaks, free land, and free buildings. The Minister of Economic Development, who has spent most of her time in China and India lately, said she talked to Siemens. She couldn't have done a very good job, because they're leaving.

So you can talk about how great your plan is. Believe me, when you keep touting your 600,000 jobs and 50,000 jobs in green energy, I want to see where those jobs are, and I want the numbers when you're done with big plan, because you're not going to come anywhere near it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I am a very excited about the very foundation on which this throne speech is built. We're dealing with some very serious issues, and I think the quality of debate in this House has been very disappointing.

The federal government, to its credit, has started down a road of trying to harmonize sales taxes in the country, and it's interesting that there's agreement by the government parties on both sides—which is probably one of the reasons they're in government on both sides of these Legislatures—around that. I was hoping that we would get a more sophisticated discussion, a more intelligent discussion, around fiscal reform and the new economy. We're living in a very different age, and it is disappointing that we're not having a more serious debate about the future of this province. In 1867—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order: I don't believe there is a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): We're going to check that there's a quorum. If the member from Toronto Centre could please be seated. Thank you.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): A quorum is not present, so we are going to have a five-minute bell to call in the members. Thank you.

The division bells rang from 1404 to 1405.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Seeing that a quorum is now present, we will continue with debate. The member for Toronto Centre.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: We were, at that time, a very rural province. Eighty per cent of us lived in small, rural communities, and less than 20% of us lived in what would even be described as small cities today. At that time, we were part of an imperial system, and you can

see much of the regalia of that era here in this House. People in Toronto, Cornwall, Port Arthur or Fort William at that time would have thought you were rather crazy if you had suggested we would ever be anything like Canadians or become a country.

When I was born in 1957, about 60% of us lived in cities, and two thirds of us worked in an industrial manufacturing economy that was very place-based. As Hilton said at the time, the three most important business decisions are location, location and location. We governed—and most public policy, provincially and nationally, was done—through tariffs and trade barriers. We governed from the edge of our country, and we controlled jobs and protected investment by adjusting prices on imports at the border and subsidizing what we produced here through marketing boards and different mechanisms: a very heavily boundary-based economy, and one that was, as the member for Hamilton East said before, very much about machinery and physical plants. Two out of three of us were involved in—and our employment relied on—making things. It was a production economy.

In the last 10 years, the economy in this province and around the world has changed more dramatically than it did even in the Industrial Revolution. Eighty per cent of the jobs that are created in Ontario right now are not jobs that have anything to do with production at all. They are jobs of innovation: people who imagine, create, design, research, experiment and manage information. There is no generation alive that has seen a greater change in its lifetime than the people who are here today.

Of the other two sectors—and right now in the city this Legislature is in, the city of Toronto—about one third of our jobs are manufacturing, and they're declining. That is happening from Poland all the way to California. We are seeing a net decline because of automation and because of offshore displacement of manufacturing jobs—the emerging economies of Brazil, China and India—and that's part of the reality of that.

Service jobs are growing by about 20%. The higher-income jobs—though it's only one third of the workforce, over 50% of the wages earned in Ontario come from that innovation sector. It is leading in job creation.

Regions that are most successful at attracting those jobs are producing jobs at five times the rate that the worst regions in the world are as far as embracing and changing their tax systems, changing their infrastructure investments and changing their public policy framework. Those that are more successful are seeing salaries increase at three times the rate they are in those areas that are the poorest performers.

We're trying to adjust and deal with that in a very dynamic way. But the investments in lifelong education, the massive investments in every university and college in this community, and the tax reforms that take \$8.5 billion in friction out of the Ontario economy are going to accelerate job creation in a way that isn't likely to happen in too many other places in Canada. The \$32 billion in infrastructure investments—everything from

water to energy, health care, transit and walkable neighbourhoods—provides a critical foundation for creating a new generation of infrastructure for a very new economy.

We have, really, five major issues that I think we have to deal with. One, we are becoming a very old province. One in four of us will be over the age of 65 within the next 20 years. Two thirds of those people live in suburban Ontario. They live in homes where there are cul-de-sacs and no sidewalks, and they can't walk to a local store. They have very limited access to anything if they don't own an automobile. In the next 20 years, many elderly Ontarians are going to lose their drivers' licences. They will not be able to drive a car, and when they can't drive a car, the implications for health care and services, given that most of them live in unwalkable neighbourhoods and can't take transit anywhere, will be a huge challenge.

1410

This is why we've gone beyond 900,000 more families with family physicians, why we've gone beyond a 42% increase in hospital budgets and why Places to Grow is so critically important—re-engineering our suburbs, re-engineering our transit systems so that those folks live in neighbourhoods where they can walk to or access services, maintain their independence and maintain life in their homes longer, which is why we've been focusing on less emphasis on institutions and more on home care and people living independently.

Eighty per cent of people don't move after age 55. For those of us who are 55 in this House, unless we're going to a seniors' home or we pass on, we're not likely leaving our homes. We're not likely to see a change in that, and that is one area of policy that I think is well established and in which there is very strong architecture for building for the future.

As I said earlier, we're moving from a production economy globally to an innovation economy, and that's a very dramatic change. The services-and-ideas economy is rapidly globalizing. The average worker, according to studies, spends less than three years in a city and less than one year in a job when they're under 30. These people are highly critical consumers of place. They are concentrating in fewer and fewer locations. They don't come looking for a job; they create jobs and they bring capital with them. Our ability to retain and attract a knowledge-based economy is dependent on our ability to retain and attract a knowledge-based workforce.

The idea of opening up Ontario's universities not only builds more capacity for our own students and for lifelong learners; it makes Ontario a first choice for the brightest people from China to India and from Poland to Peru in choosing this place as an entry point to get what is really one of the finest opportunities at a post-secondary education in the world.

Tied in with progressive immigration policies and employment policies, we will likely emerge—one of the legacies of this government—as one of the most dynamic builders of a knowledge economy, one where our fluid, dynamic, diverse population is celebrated, which allows

us to build a knowledge economy like no other. Not only will this be good for our economy in the short term; it builds a legacy for a knowledge workforce that is simply unrivalled right now in Canada.

Madam Speaker, I know that you in particular are a concerned environmentalist, and we've chatted before about the seriousness of the loss of species. If there is one crisis that is facing humanity, in which climate change is only one factor, it is the loss of biodiversity. We will lose about one third of the species on this planet by 2050.

Anyone in here, whether they are a downtown Toronto environmental activist or a farmer in Glengarry county, understands biodiversity. Farmers understand now in California, because colonizing honey bees are no longer there in numbers sufficient to sustain the honey crop.

The problem here in Ontario, as we know, is that we've lost 50% of the 20 most common bird species, many of them pollinating species essential to our agricultural base and food production. And why is that important? Because one of the places I agree on with my friend from Hamilton East is that while our knowledge economy is going to be globalizing, energy prices globally and the scarcity of fossil fuels are going to relocalize two activities that have long been globalized. One is production: We will no longer have cheap imports from China. Right now, our average meal in Ontario comes from 5,000 kilometres away. The long-distance meal will no longer be possible. We will be relocalizing food production and we will be relocalizing the production of industrial goods. Quite frankly, without getting into a long speech, because I only have a few more minutes, I don't understand, if you understand that dynamic, how you're opposed to the HST.

I was listening to Jim Flaherty speaking in New York about tax reform. I was listening to leading opinion leaders in the United States who talked about the competitive advantage that we would have over New York state and Michigan, which haven't yet harmonized their sales tax—they haven't yet done that—and about how much more capital will move to Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia as a result of this progressive measure. I am at a loss how you have any intellectual integrity when in your own party your finance minister, the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Transport are all going around selling an integrated sales tax as one of the key advantages of an economic agenda nationally and your cousins here in the House completely contradict it. To me there is a word for that, but that would be unparliamentary.

We have to become more culturally confident communities. One of the things that we know is that our birth rate is very low, that we are wholly dependent on immigration and that our ability to celebrate human diversity is going to be important to social cohesion. The mobility of people not just into the workplace but into the leadership of this government and into the leadership of all organizations in society—business, labour, education and civil society—is really important. There is great work being done by the Maytree Foundation, and I was

very pleased to see in the throne speech a very strong commitment to the celebration of human diversity and to creating a series of policies that will enable the fuller participation and full citizenship of folks.

But I want to spend my last few minutes talking about something else. While I'm an Ontarian and I'm a very proud Torontonion, that idea of social cohesion is extremely important to nation building. I'm very proud that my partner served in the Canadian Armed Forces for much of his life. He works now as a nurse. I think when you've been in the military, you understand the value of a human life and how fragile it is. And mid-career, in his 30s, my partner, Rick, went back into health care. He works here in a large hospital in an operating room helping, working with physicians—he's a very skilled neuroclinical specialist in nursing—putting lives back together again.

We always celebrate in my house on Remembrance Day, because of my family's long history of military service, how important that is and how precious our democracy and our freedom and our common ground are. And being Canadian is the most important thing to me next to being human. Why is that? Because anywhere I go in this country, I've generally been welcomed and felt as full a citizen of any community I've ever lived in as I have here in Toronto, Winnipeg or Montreal or Alexandria or Sudbury or Ottawa. I'm a very proud Ontarian, but I never put that ahead.

I'll never forget growing up as a federalist in Quebec, fighting separatists, people in a government in Quebec at the time who wanted to draw a line in the sand and say, "You've got a certain English mentality. You don't belong here." And I remember some of the bigotry in the English community, where I worked for businesses where francophones were almost absent; in a city that was 80% French-speaking, you couldn't find a French sign or get served in the major department store in your own language in Quebec. And that was one of the reasons that gave rise to that.

If I could rename the throne speech, I would call it Open and United Ontario, because for me, that is one of the reasons I became a Liberal, as a result of what I saw happening in that province and being told that if you didn't speak a certain language or you were of a certain—I remember the slurs against people who were allophones, as they called them, not anglophones or francophones, and this harbouring a complete focus on what made us different rather than what we had in common.

I remember the jeering I would get from folks sometimes in western Canada when I would give the speeches in Winnipeg and Calgary about why Toronto and why Ontario were so important to western Canada. I remember in a federal election I ran in, the Conservative candidate said to me, "Well, if you like Toronto so much, why don't you go live there?" I always noticed that there was this Conservative right-wing agenda that said Ontario was bad: "Vote Conservative and liberate the west because Ontario has had the stranglehold on Canada

for too long." That's the kind of politics I ran against in the west, and that was to me as vicious and as nasty and as divisive as the separatism in Quebec.

I've lived in Ontario for just about as long as I lived in Manitoba. I don't feel any less an Ontarian than anyone else, nor do over half the people I represent in Toronto Centre, very proudly part of this province, who weren't even born in this country.

1420

If we start asking how long you have lived here, where you came from, why you came here and what the colour of your skin is, then we have defeated the most important thing that we've committed to in the throne speech, which is not an acceptance, not a tolerance of human diversity but a celebration of it: the full enfranchisement of women, the full engagement of young people who have brown skin to play as equal a role in leadership in this party and this government and this province as any other. I stand with that.

I was horrified when a certain member of the Conservative Party stood up and suggested that my city, because of a Toronto mentality, should be in a different province. Well, I've milked cows on a farm in Alexandria, and I understand the mentality, so-called, of people who live in parts of rural Ontario, because my father bought into a farm. My uncles were all miners in Sudbury. They died younger than I am right now of respiratory illnesses because of horrible conditions, and my aunt, who lives there to this day and is in her 90s, took mining companies all the way to the Supreme Court to get decent pensions for widows.

I worked with the mayor of Kenora to help get garbage out of the Canadian Shield that was leaching into our water system and our watershed and destroying the tourism base in fresh water that was the lifeblood of Kenora to Dryden to Winnipeg, and it didn't matter that there was a provincial boundary there. I dare say that I have spent more time in northern Ontario and a lot more time on some farms in the province than some of my colleagues here. That doesn't make me a better person, but when I hear jokes about the member for Winnipeg Centre—well, I'm proud I lived in Winnipeg, because I saw what happened to my brothers and sisters who were mayors of various communities under the Harris government, and what was happening here was not pleasant.

Quite frankly, I'm also really disappointed, when we have come forward with one of the most aggressive, balanced approaches to getting out of deficit, facing the worst economic times in Canadian history, certainly in my lifetime, since the Great Depression—not to rush out of it but to get out of deficit within a reasonable period of time and maintain that investment in services. There is probably no bigger challenge facing the Legislature than this, because we're not Alberta or Saskatchewan; we're not bouncing on resource revenues and commodity prices. That's the challenge we have.

The most difficult—I speak of this having worked in the field for years: Manufacturing-based economies are the most challenged, whether they are in the United

States, England, France or Ontario. I came here and ran proudly, and I understand the relationship between investment in infrastructure, fiscal reform, day-long education, lifelong education as a complete plan for opening up this province.

But let us never—and I hope that those of you who are committed federalists and committed Ontarians stop playing one group of us against the other. As a gay man, I spent most of my life illegal, not being able to be a parent, and losing jobs and apartments. I have no time for people who want to talk about what makes me different, because I stand here proudly, I think with all of you, being a Canadian first and an Ontarian, with no apologies and—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I am really pleased to participate in today's debate on the throne speech. I believe the passage of this throne speech will mark a pivotal point in the history of our province.

After being hit hard by the worst global recession in generations, we have a choice. We can try to do the minimum and focus on just getting through the global economic downturn, hoping that everything will go back to normal, or we can take this as an opportunity to revolutionize our province by becoming a leading green economy, a centre for innovation and new technology, and a place where the education of our people is the best of our assets.

The world has changed, and we must change with it. We can no longer depend on exporting to the US because of our lower dollar and close proximity. Our competitors are not just south of the border. Markets like China and India are fierce competitors. Without big, bold action, without being creative, without being innovative, we will be left behind. We cannot afford to not change. That is why I'm supporting the government's new five-year Open Ontario plan.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm happy to respond to the member from Toronto Centre and to some of the comments he made. I will be making some comments myself in a few minutes on the throne speech.

He makes some points, and he's got his opinions and his concerns. I'm disappointed that he continues to play politics. Anti-conservatism is what I hear coming out of his voice almost every time he opens his mouth, and that's his right. We are in a political party here; we are opposition versus government, and he has every right to say that.

His slamming of Mike Harris: I was disappointed in that comment because under Mike Harris, Ontario created a million jobs. How many jobs have we created under Dalton McGuinty? Some 300,000 lost manufacturing jobs; 145,000 jobs in the last year alone. I wouldn't be slamming Mike Harris too badly until I had a record equivalent to his.

I will have an opportunity in a few minutes to make my comments. I'm looking forward to it. The throne

speech is the government's message. We didn't see anything very substantial in the throne speech. I am going to make some of those comments in a few minutes myself and will look forward to making the comments.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I must confess that I was a little dismayed with the member from Toronto Centre questioning the intellectual content of the submissions by the third party and the official opposition. I thought that this House was for a healthy debate and opinions counted by everyone, but what I hear out there in the public is the constant comment about the arrogance of the McGuinty government: "Big Brother knows best." Well, here is a perfect example of "Big Brother knows best."

The best defence for any government is offence. So you divert, you stretch, you attack the opposition. Methinks thou protest too much. Me also thinks: What has your personal history and life got to do with the throne speech? I'm quite surprised that that was added in too. For a new member, that was quite an aggressive attack on the members of this House—very disappointing. I hope that we can stick to the issues and we can stick to the content and not divert to other things to get the public thinking about things that are not the most important things that are going on in our province. It's all political grandstanding: very disappointing, but you have become an expert, being the former mayor of Winnipeg. And I believe you were a former NDP member, if I'm not mistaken, so that is quite interesting, that you are slamming your former party.

I'm quite disappointed, Madam Speaker, that that member would get up and attack the other parties. It's very disgusting, and I think someone should take a good, hard look at these types of actions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order. Member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was listening carefully to the comments from my new colleague, the member from Toronto Centre–Rosedale.

One of the things I'd like to touch upon, because I know he knows this, is that the throne speech talked about Ontario taking the opportunity, based on our water technology, to provide that technology to other provinces across Canada, and indeed to export it to other parts of the world. He is familiar with a great initiative at Trent University in Peterborough. A number of years ago we established the Worsfold Water Quality Centre under the direction of Professor Chris Metcalfe, and I think the member may have toured that facility a number of years ago. The throne speech highlights that kind of opportunity. We are doing state-of-the-art research in Peterborough.

I know the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek talked about Siemens. Siemens has an operation, a manufacturing plant, in Peterborough, and in their Peter-

borough operation they actually specialize in water and waste water technology. They also established a training centre in Peterborough, where they take municipal officials from right across Ontario—indeed, right across Canada—to do their training at Siemens; to make these municipal operators familiar in the use of Siemens-designed and manufactured equipment. These are the kinds of issues that the member from Toronto Centre was clearly articulating in his response to the speech from the throne and, indeed, his first formal speech to the House.

1430

From time to time we do engage in some partisan observations in this House, but I think that once you peel those away, the member from Toronto Centre provided great content and talked about some issues that he's very familiar with due to his background as mayor of Winnipeg. We certainly welcome him to Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Toronto Centre has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I apologize if I offended anyone. That was certainly not my intention. I thought that when you dish it out, you can take it. There seems to be a bit of thin skin there.

I have to say that one of the things I enjoy, sitting in the House, is the great wit and, to put a polite edge on it, aggressive questioning from my friend from Hamilton East.

I have to tell you—and I said this before—I rose on a point of order about ascribing motives. I think that this House threw out subsection 23(i) of the standing orders. You'll notice I did not attack anybody's character. I did not mention any individual name. I explained the disappointment I had when you disconnect the HST, which is really a joint initiative of the national and provincial governments of this country, and don't understand it in context when your own party is running nationally on a sales tax as a foundation of economic recovery. I just think that's a bit disingenuous, and I don't think it's rude or overly partisan to say so.

Quite frankly, I'm going to tell you that when I was born in this country I was illegal. It was impossible for me to get married, have a child or even keep a job. So, yes, I'm very sensitive to people who draw lines and differences. No, I am not someone who talks about minorities—members into the third party—as if I don't actually hold membership in that party. Having been the first person in my community to be elected mayor of a major city in the world, I knew what a breakthrough it was, in the same way it was for my grandmother, who came from the Ukraine and wore a babushka; who never rose beyond being a cleaning lady because she was the butt of every joke in her community amongst other people who were not more recently arrived and who didn't speak English with an accent. That is very important. I was not the one who suggested that my city and my constituency, because we have a mentality—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased to rise today to discuss my comments on the throne speech. I'm also looking forward to the debate that will take place after Thursday, when the government brings in the 2010-11 budget, which I hope will have far more explanation and detail to it than we have seen in the throne speech. Quite clearly, it was very vague; kind of a rough draft of a speech that we have to adopt or look at as the throne speech.

I think, as a member of the PC Party, we're very concerned about the state of the economy in Ontario. I think we should just review some of the things that have happened over the last little while.

This year we're finishing up a year where we are projecting a \$24.7-billion deficit. I believe that's about two and a half times higher than any previous deficit we've ever had in the province of Ontario—and that was under the Rae years; I think it got to be \$11 billion. The problem is, as we go toward the end of this term and we're looking toward 2011, at the rate we're going, we're going to end up with a quarter-trillion-dollar accumulated debt. That's \$248 billion that this province will owe. Our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren will have to absorb that. I'm a father and a grandfather. I'm very concerned about the future of the province of Ontario with that kind of accumulated debt. The throne speech really doesn't deal with that. I think they have 24 words in the throne speech, and I will read them. Basically it says, "A plan for a stronger Ontario...."

"That's why, in its next budget, your government will lay out a plan to return the budget to balance."

Here's what they say they're going to do for our economy in the throne speech: "Your government will not put economic growth at risk by cutting too much, too soon," whatever that means.

"Nor will it proceed with spending as if there is no deficit."

When you're planning a throne speech and calling it the "Open Ontario plan," and you're looking at the next session of this Parliament and where the government is going, I think a lot of people expected a lot better, a lot more from their government, especially a second-term government, than 24 words that day saying, "We're going to do something. We're not going to cut money, but blah, blah, blah, blah."

That's why, as a Progressive Conservative, I felt sort of insulted by that level of throne speech dialogue, because it was pretty sad.

Then we go on to other things that have happened in Ontario in the last little while: the 300,000 lost manufacturing jobs. Almost every day you can turn on the TV, listen to the local media or listen to a chamber of commerce report, and you'll hear of another plant closing. The one in Hamilton, the Siemens plant, is the latest one: 500 jobs. There are the problems we have with Grant Forest Products, the jobs up in Earlton, Ontario, and the list goes on and on.

People seem to think, "Well, that's contraction"—I think the Premier used the word "contraction" at one

time; that was his solution for it. On the other hand, one of the problems we've got is that some southern jurisdictions—our friends and neighbours to the south—are offering phenomenal incentive packages for some of these plants to move there. We've seen it with John Deere. We're now seeing it with Siemens and with a number of other plants, and that is a sad situation, because when they talk about the Second Career program and what a magnificent plan this was supposed to be, those are the very people we would be helping. Of course, we know that has been a complete failure.

The other thing that I think is interesting to note, when we're talking about the throne speech, is that I never heard anything about the fact we have the slowest growth rate in our country. I believe that all other jurisdictions are outperforming the province of Ontario in economic growth right now. Something we, in the province of Ontario, have always been is the engine that drove the Canadian economy.

I know the government has got some green energy ideas on how they'll plan it in the future. However, when you lose 300,000 manufacturing jobs, you just don't replace those overnight with somebody building wind-mills or solar panels, or whatever it may be. Now, of course, we're on Canada's welfare roll. We're a have-not province. We're now receiving equalization funding or assistance from the Canadian government.

These all add up to be points that I thought would maybe be partially addressed in the throne speech, but we didn't really come up with any strong evidence that the government was concerned about rebuilding this economy.

One of the interesting things, if you compare the throne speech—the previous speaker, from Toronto Centre, used the federal finance minister and the programs, thoughts and policies that the federal government is putting forward. The federal government had a far more detailed throne speech on how they were going to address some of the problems that the country itself was facing. I was expecting the same sort of comments and the same sort of dialogue in the throne speech that we saw in the federal speech. So, lots of things to talk about.

One of the things the government has really hung their hat on, in my opinion—it will be very interesting to see this North American centre of excellence for water, the Water Opportunities Act and all the things the government talks about on, I think, page 6 of the throne speech: "As part of its Open Ontario plan, your government will introduce legislation that will build on Ontario's expertise in clean water technology." I know we have expertise in different areas. We've been very predominant in the manufacturing of automobiles. I never knew we had a lot of expertise in water technology, other than the fact that the member from Peterborough just mentioned one example. But we're talking \$400 billion here, the size of the pocket of money that you're trying to tap into.

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I'm one person who really does believe in some of the comments that are made here, in that I think in the future

there may be wars fought over water. I think the whole planet has done a pretty bad job in a lot of areas in the way we handle our water. A lot of it has to do with climate change etc. But I can think of three things in Ontario, right off the top of my mind, where if we're going to be a centre of excellence or the North American centre of excellence for water, there are maybe areas we should try to fix now.

One of them is the declining levels of our Great Lakes. The water levels in the Great Lakes, on average, are going down each and every year. Last year, in the winter of 2008-09, we had a fairly heavy snowfall type of year, and we ended up with the lakes' water level rising five or six inches. This year, however, the water levels are going to be much lower because we've had a very, very poor amount of snowfall this year, and we don't expect that the water levels will increase much. In fact, by the time you get to July or August, we're going to see probably close to record levels of the Great Lakes.

Of course, we have an abundance of fresh water in Ontario and in the Great Lakes. I think we here take water so for granted, because of the Great Lakes and because of the thousands of lakes we have in our province, that we tend to not pay a lot of attention when the water levels drop. But when the water levels drop in our Great Lakes, it's trillions and trillions of gallons of water that have disappeared, and we have that to be concerned about as we develop the Water Opportunities Act.

I'm very interested in seeing that legislation. I'm very interested in seeing how we will listen to the general public in Ontario and seeing what that actually does mean, because I think the government's probably going to get an earful.

The second thing I wanted to mention under the Water Opportunities Act, or under the water section of the throne speech, was that we've got these programs out there now, these panels of people across our province that are called the water source protection committees. I believe there are 11 or 12 in Ontario right now. They're trying to plot all the different water sources in Ontario and how to protect them. I know a number of the people on the water source protection committee that does Simcoe county and Muskoka and into York region. It's the largest water source protection committee in the province, with the most water sources.

I can tell you right now, Madam Speaker, something you might want to know: So far, in the last year and a half, the water source protection committees combined have spent \$246 million on consultants alone. I don't know how much value they're getting for dollars in that. We've been told that that will go to at least \$400 million before the final reports come through. So you're looking at four tenths of a billion dollars just in consultants to plot the water source protection sources in the province of Ontario. I hope, under your Water Opportunities Act, every penny of that can be justified, because if you're spending that kind of money on consultants, you really need to know that you're getting value for money and it's

not going to be another one of these Courtyard deals—where, like with the eHealth scandal, you've got a billion dollars wasted and everybody's now suing the government for not finishing off the contracts, that type of thing.

Finally—I had to bring this up because it's a local issue to me—there's the whole thing around Bill 32 and the prorogation of the House and eliminating second reading debate that was passed on my private member's bill on a waste disposal site in Tiny township, site 41. I was so disappointed, and so were the people in our community who put literally thousands of hours into letter-writing campaigns trying to get people in this House to support a private member's bill that received second reading. Then, of course, these same people went back to the MPPs, trying to ask them to not prorogue this bill but to let it continue on.

This water, I'm going to say it again, has been identified as some of the purest water ever seen on the planet, and that's been done by Dr. William Shotyk from the University of Heidelberg in Germany. He identified this water underground on landfill site 41, where the proposed landfill would be, as the cleanest water in the world, second only to some of the water in the glaciers. To think that on the Thursday you would prorogue the House, shut down all private members' bills legislation, all the work that had been done from all the different members of this House, and then turn around on the Monday and brag about a Water Opportunities Act when you just squashed a private member's bill that was going to do away with the C of A on the cleanest water on the planet—now tell me how that really fits in. I would love to know the connection.

Anyhow, I'm going to reintroduce the bill. I've got it right here. I'm going to reintroduce it tomorrow and we're going to do the same thing all over again, because we're going to continue to fight to make sure the C of A is removed from that site 41.

Another thing the government brags about in the throne speech is the Second Career program. I don't know. They identify one young gentleman in here who took a course at Fleming. He lost his job as a manufacturer, and now he's going to be a chef. He took the chef course. They paid him for two years of training. It sounds wonderful, but the guy still hasn't got a job. That's the guy they use here in the example. He's looking for work.

I can tell you that my office has been inundated with people who have tried to get on the Second Career program to get some training money, some training assistance, whether it is a loss of a manufacturing job, whatever it may be, and they have been completely turned down. So the government is bragging in this thing. In fact, I think it's probably the keynote thing they talk about in the throne speech—the success of the Second Career program. Of course, we all know—and I notice they didn't mention that either—the Second Career program is all federal money. It's money that was sent from the federal government, from that mean Stephen Harper

and Jim Flaherty. It was sent to the Ontario government, and that's the Second Career money that they are bragging about so much.

In my opinion, and from what I'm hearing from my constituents, this has not been a wonderful success. We will see at the end of the story how many people actually have jobs that are paying taxes, not people that are enrolled in a program and their name is in the throne speech, but actually have a job. That's what I am really concerned about.

Then we get to things like red tape. I'm going to tell you, I've got stories here, newspaper clippings. Here is a guy right here who has been in business for 25 years. He's got a small abattoir; he kills chickens and turkeys up in rural Ontario. He does it for thousands of square miles around the Orillia area. The company is Dan Dan the Chicken Man. Sounds funny, eh? But have you seen it? This guy is finally giving up his business. There are so many inspectors coming to see his business, to see his operation. No one has ever died from one of the chickens he's killed, no one has ever lost their life, but when they show up to inspect his place, every time, they find something and they want to put the guy out of business. Finally, at the end of this year, they are going to drive him out of business, and he's gone. He says he's got to make enough money to put his last child into university and help her out, and then he's going to have to close the operation down. Already people are calling our office and saying, "Where are we going to get our chickens killed in an orderly manner, where it's done according to all the meat inspections and all the different kinds of inspections?" Well, it won't be with this guy anymore, and he does it for miles and miles around the area. I could read that article but it would take too long.

Then we go on. So many people here are talking about this harmonized sales tax. Our caucus feels this is a tax on the consumer and that it couldn't have been brought in at a worse time than now. Other provinces—and that is what we forget to mention here—reduced the provincial sales tax by 3% and 4%. We haven't done that in Ontario. We're giving people back \$1,000—some of the people are going to get \$1,000; other people might get \$50 or \$75 or whatever it may be—but they're not going to get huge sums of money back and they are going to get it in three separate cheques. A government that hasn't got the ability to think of sending out one cheque—why would you send out three separate cheques? The cost of the mailing alone—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Harris sent cheques out too.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Remember we got defeated? That's what's going to happen to you, when you send those cheques out.

Three separate cheques—why not just send out one cheque one time if you're going to give the money back? We're using the word—we shouldn't say here what it is, but we all know what that cheque is. The reality is, they should have just dropped the provincial sales tax level, if they wanted to introduce the harmonization, and made it revenue-neutral. The reality is, this is not revenue-

neutral; this is a \$3.5-billion tax grab from the McGuinty Liberals to the citizens of the province of Ontario. No matter how you look at it—

Interjections.

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Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You can yell and scream and you can heckle me all you want, but the reality is, people hate this tax. Seniors hate it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Barrie, come to order.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Everyone I know hates this tax. Just ask municipalities how it's going to impact them. Ask the Ontario Provincial Police how it's going to affect their budget. Name it, name it, name it, and you know what? Over and over again, I'm hearing it every day. This will be the downfall of your government; you can be sure of that. Unless you find some magical way out of this one, you've got a big, big problem ahead of yourselves.

I have to say one other thing: three key areas that were not mentioned in the throne speech, three key things.

There was not one word about a key industry in Ontario: tourism. Not a word. You would have thought they would have mentioned something about trying to bring people into Ontario, especially in a year when we have so much pride in our country with the Olympics. We're planning on trying to do something with the War of 1812 in a couple of years, and we're going to do something with the Pan Am Games. Not a word. You'd think, if you had any kind of vision or plan, you'd mention something about tourism. Not a word.

Another thing: Did anybody see the word "seniors" in there? Not a word about our seniors in this so-called throne speech.

Then the final thing is, as a critic for community safety and correctional services, nothing—nothing—about community safety; nothing about policing. Nothing was mentioned about how we're going to keep law and order and what our plan is for law and order in the province of Ontario as we move forward in the next three, four and five years under these difficult economic times.

So when you add it all up, we're debating a throne speech, but you know what? I have three little granddaughters. Any one of them could have written a better throne speech than this one—any one of them, because this was pathetic. It was vague, and it didn't give us any direction for the future. You know, yourself, when a government comes up with 24 words—24 words—and that's how they're going to get rid of a \$24.7-billion deficit, there's not much direction coming from the Minister of Finance or from the Premier's office.

In summary, I can't support a throne speech like this. As we look towards the budget, I think it will be just about as weak and pathetic. In fact, we'll look at it and we'll debate it, but as members of the opposition, we're allowed to stand and talk the way we have today. We're allowed to take part in this debate. It's not just a Dalton McGuinty government and a Dalton McGuinty party in

Ontario. There are three separate parties in this House. They all deserve an opportunity to debate it, and they all deserve to voice their comments. As far as I'm concerned, this is a pretty pathetic example of a throne speech to be presented here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Simcoe North has delivered a scathing indictment of this throne speech. In effect, what the member said is something I believe and had occasion to say immediately upon hearing this throne speech. The throne speech is, especially in hard times—because we've got hard times that the Liberals have made in this province right now. We have hundreds of thousands of people losing jobs. We've got families at risk, homeowners at risk. We've got students dropping out of school because they can't afford second-, third- and fourth-year tuitions. We've got people in despair. One would have hoped, with all the high-price help that this government pays for, that they could have drafted a throne speech that at least provided some inspiration, that perhaps gave a little bit of hope, however feckless that hope was, to some of those people out there who are hurting bad right now. Instead, like the member says in his comments, this throne speech didn't provide hope. It compounded the despair. It didn't provide relief from the fear of what's happening. Rather, it aggravated that very real fear.

I'm going to be able to speak to this throne speech next on behalf of New Democrats. My colleague from Kenora—Rainy River has indulged me by letting me go before him.

I talked to Grace Tomiuck down in Wainfleet on the phone just before I came back into the chamber, to get permission to talk about her and Steve Tomiuck. Grace was kind of interested to see what I was going to say, to make sure it was accurate. She'll let me know if I'm not.

I talked to Joe DiMarco and asked him if it was okay to talk about him and what has been happening with Joe DiMarco down there in Welland riding over the last short while. He said it was okay to talk about him and his business, Universal Windows.

So I'm looking forward to making my contribution on behalf of New Democrats. I thank Howard Hampton for indulging me, and I tell you, New Democrats have things to say.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I want to assure my friend from Simcoe North that I wasn't offended at all by his partisanship, first off, nor were my feelings hurt. As a matter of fact, I thought he made some rather good points. I think his battle, in non-partisan fashion, on site 41 is an important one and I encourage him in that direction.

He did raise the issue of water, and I think it's a pretty critical issue. Someone in the next five or 10 years is going to play a leadership role in dealing with likely the largest and most immediate environmental crisis in the

first couple of decades of the century, and that will be that by 2015, one in three of us on this planet will not have enough water to drink. To give you an idea of how little water that is, that's about what the average Ontarian flushes in one flush of the toilet. We are a leader. Royal Bank of Canada right now is one of the leading funders in the world of water development and water research. My friend from Peterborough mentioned the important work being done there, Siemens, the work being done at U of T. The work that I was involved with at the Canadian Urban Institute, which is looking at water management, water mapping and watershed management and technology, is some of the leading work in the world.

This will be a huge area of employment. I think that there were some sincere questions about how big is \$400 billion. It sounds like a very small number when you think of the challenge within the next five-year cycle. By the time the Pan Am Games are held here in Ontario, we will be facing a critical issue. This will be something that touches the heart of every Ontarian, because many of these countries and regions that will not have sufficient water supplies to sustain the lives of young people and old people alike are places where many of us trace our roots and many of us have family.

I also just—the member—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to start by congratulating my colleague the member from Simcoe North for pointing out the obvious inadequacies of this document that's called a throne speech. I think that if this is indicative of this government's inspiration, then we don't really have much to look forward to with the budget that's coming up on Thursday, and we should all be very worried.

As my colleague mentioned, there was no mention of seniors in this throne speech at all. When you look at it in a context particularly of health care, I read that with great interest, looking for some inspiration, but when you look at the situation right now, where we have so many of our seniors who are waiting for long-term-care placements, who are staying on in acute care hospitals, which is backing up the entire system—they call them bed blockers; what a ridiculous thing to call people. There's no dignity whatsoever in that. We're really treating our seniors quite shamefully in this respect. I think when you take a look at it, if you're really serious about making some changes in health care, you should be visiting some of our acute care centres.

I was in Kingston about a month ago for a health care forum and one of the emergency room physicians there told me that right now they're actually triaging patients in the waiting area. He said, "What's next? Are we going have a MASH unit in the parking lot?" That's what it's coming to in the province of Ontario. Those are the issues that we need to be dealing with when you're looking at 46 cents of every tax dollar on health care right now. We need to really be getting serious about this, really looking for real solutions for all members of

our population, not just for seniors. That's an area that wasn't even mentioned in this document.

Another area that wasn't even mentioned, other than to just give passing lip service, was the situation for people with special needs in the province of Ontario. We're not going to have the Ontarians with Disabilities Act fully implemented until 2025. We still have a lot of work to do on that. Even with that target that far out, we've got a long way to go and no indication in this throne speech of how we're going to get there. I think we've got to get serious—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to make a comment on the member from Simcoe North. Once again, he's come up with some very good points. We all have concerns, the third party as well as the official opposition, about the throne speech and the lack of content. We were hoping for more answers. It's very frustrating to go back to your riding and not have answers for the very people who are losing their jobs as to the direction the government is taking.

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They talk about water renewal—that's good—and they talk about the Ring of Fire in the north, but there's not a lot going on about manufacturing jobs. Most of the people in my community are involved with manufacturing, and we've been hit so hard that it's to a point now where we are just dumbfounded with the amount of job losses.

We see nothing happening in Hamilton. Sure, we're getting a few medical jobs coming our way, but there are only so many positions for researchers, doctors, specialists, chemists and jobs like that. How about the people out there who have lost their jobs in a steel mill or in a small manufacturing or secondary industry? These are the people who come to me on a daily basis with their frustrations. They're losing their houses and losing their life's savings, and there doesn't seem to be a heck of a lot going on.

I reiterate: If you continue to let foreign countries own our base industries and rape this country of its natural resources, and then, when there's a recession or depression, they close their foreign operations and go back to their country of origin—that's what's going on in Canada right now. We warned them five or 10 years ago, and they didn't listen. They have sold us out. This province and country have been sold out to multinationals by governments, and that's why we are in the trouble we are. Until they start getting 50% Canadian content in our businesses in this country, we're in trouble.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Simcoe North has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Welland, Toronto Centre, Whitby—Oshawa and Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for their comments. At this time, I also want to introduce a friend of mine in the audience today, Councillor Maurice McMillan from the

city of Orillia. Maurice is down on the Bill 235 hearings—some real concerns about the marketing people around hydro and oil heating etc.

I don't really have a lot to say in my closing remarks in summary, other than that I thought the throne speech was vague. People have said to me, "Look for all the detail in the budget." Of course, the budget will be on Thursday, and I look forward to the budget and to looking at it very carefully.

Again, I'm extremely concerned about the financial position of the province, and I think that a lot of lending agencies are as well. A lot of long-time very supportive people of Ontario are very concerned about where we stand right now with our economic situation and where the McGuinty government is taking us. As we look toward the next 18 months, that will all be part of the platform we develop to try to convince the citizens of Ontario that we're a better alternative, as the Progressive Conservative Party, under the leadership of Tim Hudak.

Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words today, and I look forward to the remaining time in debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: As I indicated, I'm pleased, on behalf of the New Democrats here, to have this opportunity to speak to and about this government's oh so lacklustre and disappointing throne speech.

Unfortunately, while some may hope that the budget is going to provide more, I say that hope is poorly placed. I'd say you're better off going out and buying one of those 6/49 tickets. Your odds are probably better with an Ontario lottery game than they are with this government—the Liberals and Dalton McGuinty—here in the province of Ontario.

There are a couple of things I experienced in the last couple of weeks that I think are very relevant, especially since they're post-throne speech. One, I was delighted that Malcolm Allen—he's the federal member for Welland now and part of the NDP team in Ottawa—and I were so fortunate to be asked to join folks at the grand opening of a Rona store.

I don't know if you know what a Rona store is, Speaker, because sometimes folks from downtown Toronto don't get to experience these kinds of things, but a Rona store is a big hardware store. Rona is exceptional, because it is a Canadian company. Its roots are in Quebec, and it has now spread across the country. It's a publicly traded company.

That, of course, makes one feel a little better about the whole thing, and I felt really good about this opening, because it was the opening of a new Rona store that was owned and operated by Jonas Tomiuck. Jonas is a young man and an exceptional hockey player, I must say—Welland riding tends to produce exceptional hockey players; Thorold is part of Welland riding—an exceptional hockey player, but the third generation of lumber and hardware people. I was so proud to join Jonas and his family and staff at that Rona store.

Grace and Steve Tomiuck, the grandparents, couldn't be there. Steve just had heart surgery a few weeks ago and is still at home recovering. I just talked to Grace this afternoon. She had to go to the walk-in clinic last week, and she's not feeling well. They fear she might have pneumonia, but I told her she's going to be fine because she's tough just like Steve is.

I've known these people all of my life: Steve and Grace Tomiuck. They opened Welland Lumber 65 years ago—65 years ago. A few years ago I was at their old location on Southworth Street South, where they were celebrating their 60th anniversary in business. The prospect of a new, big Rona store was not even on the horizon, but they were a Rona affiliate.

Steve comes from down Wright Street—Crowland, the south end of Welland. Those are good people on Wright Street, down in the south end of Welland—Crowland, just around the corner from the labour temple on Ontario Road. That was the home base for workers and their families for so many years down there. It was one of the home bases for the great Crowland relief workers strike. You know that history: when Mitch Hepburn—oh, yes, another one of those—sent in his hand-picked, armed troops to force relief workers to dig sewers when those relief recipients, during that last Great Depression, wanted just a few pennies more a day because they couldn't afford to feed their families. Even though they were working for their welfare, they couldn't afford to feed their families, and they simply wanted a few pennies a day.

I've got to tell you, down in that part of Welland, going on strike was an idea that was cultivated even in the youngest of kids. A free person in a free society has every right to withdraw their labour, because if you don't have the right to withdraw your labour, you're not a free person and you're not living in a free society. But I digress just a little bit.

I just want to try to illustrate the kind of background that Steve Tomiuck has lived. He was born down there on Wright Street in 1925. His parents were immigrants from Europe. In fact, Grace grew up on Cozy Street. I know those homes. I know those houses like the back of my hand.

They got married by Reverend Fern Sayles. You may not have heard of Fern Sayles. We know him well down in Welland. He was the minister at All Peoples' United Church, the old Methodist mission church. Fern Sayles ran a couple of times for the Progressive Labour Party. Regrettably, Fern Sayles was not a CCFer. We wished he were. But he became one, in due course, as time unfolded. Steve and Grace were married by Fern Sayles over in the All Peoples' church.

Steve started Welland Lumber by going door to door, fixing people's screen doors and screen windows. And you'll know, and I know that the member for Whitby—Oshawa knows this too; some people may not know what wood storm windows are, what wood storm doors are, what wood screens are. She owns a very old house. I know that, because she has talked to me about it. I own a

very old house too. I'm sure her house is much nicer than my old house, but nonetheless they're both old houses. Mine is the vintage of 1914.

Steve went door to door, fixing people's screens on their storm windows or on their storm doors. Pretty soon he had a lumberyard. He had great carpentry skills. One of the things I had occasion to see—I had occasion to see it at the Rona store opening and had occasion to see it five years ago at the 60th anniversary. Steve Tomiuck: 65 years of building homes, churches, schools, hospitals, providing the materials; in some cases, providing his own labour, his own talent, his own trade skills. His was a generation of builders. He was the kind of folk who built things, didn't tear them down, and who saw prosperity grow.

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He and his wife, Steve and Grace, struggled through the Depression, but they saw their kids grow up with better educations than they had, and they saw their grandchildren grow up with outstanding post-secondary school, college and university, and careers. Now Steve sees his grandson Jonas at the age of, I think, about 30 as the owner/operator of this Rona store.

Now, what context do I put that in? First, these are fine people for whom I have the highest regard. You've got to understand it. Again, folks in Toronto may not understand this, but when you come from small- and smaller-town Ontario, we do things a little differently. When you're dealing with business people like Steve Tomiuck or any of his sons or grandchildren, as often as not, a handshake seals the deal, instead of complex contracts that are only going to make the lawyers rich, at the end of the day. Steve Tomiuck and his family have a reputation—a well-earned reputation—of being as honest and trustworthy as anybody ever could be. See, I know these people, and I've also been a customer of theirs.

But it's the grand opening, we've got all these VPs and people out of the head office in Quebec and local politicians and so on, and as I'm walking through the store, I say hi to the staff. You know who the staff are because they are wearing the Rona uniforms, just a jacket or a sweater. "Hey, how are you doing?" "How are you doing?" You see, I knew most of those workers.

I've known them for a long time, too, because most of those workers who are working at that Rona—Rona was able to create around 60 jobs at the opening of that store—are the people who have lost their jobs over the course of the last two, two and a half or three years, while Dalton McGuinty and his gang twiddled their thumbs, while there was mere fiddling going on while burning was going on in smaller-town and small-town Ontario from the north to the southeast to the west. Sixty new jobs: Of course we celebrate that. You know how many people were lined up for those 60 jobs? Because those were 60 winners. They won that job lottery, not that they didn't deserve it—because I know those folks. There are a whole lot of skilled trades working in that Rona store, a whole lot of people from the construction industry. You couldn't be better served. You're getting

good value for your dollar, I can tell you that. But the lineup of applicants for those 60 jobs was hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people.

There was nothing in Mr. McGuinty's throne speech that alleviates the fear and the anguish of those hundreds of good men and women who couldn't get hired at that Rona because, after all, there were only 60 jobs, and that's a substantial number of jobs—in Dalton McGuinty's economy, in any event, at any rate.

Why, it was just a few weeks ago that the last worker, the last man standing—if I dare say it—walked out of the John Deere plant in Welland. John Deere has a 100-year history down in Welland, building agricultural equipment. There isn't a farmer in this province who doesn't know what the green and yellow of John Deere means. Eight hundred jobs gone, not because there was no more demand for the product but gone to Mexico. Did this government have any leverage in terms of keeping those jobs here?

I've got to tell you, I'm going to talk—I have and I'll talk a little bit more—about Grace and Steve Tomiuck. I'm going to talk about Joe DiMarco, because that's important, too. I've known Joe for a long time. Joe married my dear friend Jennifer Wright. I was at their wedding. That was a long time ago. That was over 20 years ago. Jennifer is a delightful young woman, and as a matter of fact, her father was Rev. Robert Wright, who was the successor of Rev. Fern Sayles at All Peoples' United Church. See how in small-town Ontario, things are different? Everything all comes together.

Robert Wright was a CCFer and an NDP candidate. In fact, the first campaign I ever worked on—I think I was 12 years old—was Robert Wright's campaign as NDP candidate down there in Welland. You'd be surprised at how effective a 12- or 13-year-old kid—I had some charm in those days. I've lost it since, but a rather charming 12- or 13-year-old kid knocking on doors could do things for a candidate that grumpy old men like this can't.

Jennifer is the daughter of—and Nancy McRae, her dear mother whom I love dearly and is still a dear friend. These people were very kind to me. They were my mentors in terms of political values and social views amongst a collection of great mentors.

Joe DiMarco runs a company called Universal Windows. As a matter of fact, he has a website: universalwindows.ca. He has been installing some windows in my 100-year-old house—some retrofits. He has done several installations, and I had a chance to see some of his crew down there because, last week, of course, we weren't here at Queen's Park. I was here Monday and Tuesday, went back for Wednesday for the Rona opening and came back here, then went back because Joe DiMarco and Universal Windows and his crew were coming on Friday.

I watched them install windows. Man, are they good. These people know their business. His crew is a relatively young group. Joe's not an oldster, but he's not 21 anymore. I wouldn't think of buying and having

windows installed by anybody other than Joe DiMarco because of, again, how trustworthy he is, how integrous he is and how skilful he is at doing the installations and initial measurements.

His windows, you see, are made right in Niagara Falls. They're made by A.C. Vinyl Windows Ltd. They've been around for 25 years or so. They're Energy Star- and EnerGuide-rated windows. They're good stuff. I'm so pleased. I was just so happy. I was as happy as a pig in a barnyard to be at the Rona store because the other thing is, Rona is Quebec-based. It's very big on environmental issues. So is Jonas Tomiuck and his family, and also very big on promoting Canadian and, more so, Ontario product.

I'm getting to the throne speech. We're getting there. It's the scenic route, but we're going to get to where we're going to.

The first display I see when I walk into the Rona store is the barbecue display, and is the stuff made offshore or even in the United States? Are those high-priced Webers American-made? No; it's stuff right out of Kitchener, Ontario—Onward Manufacturing. I've got to tell you, in 25 years I haven't owned anything other than an OMC, an Onward Manufacturing—they make Broil King and Broil-Mate: top-notch products made not just in Canada, but made right here in Ontario, and manufactured and assembled in the Kitchener area.

I was more than pleased to see that. The reason I've owned so many OMC—Onward Manufacturing—Broil King—Sterling is another brand—is because it took me a few times before I got smart enough to realize you put the chain with the padlock to a post in the ground. I know that those Canadian-made and Ontario-made barbecues are still serving somebody well, and I wish the new owners of those barbecues the very best. I hope that they've derived as much pleasure as my neighbours and I do from our barbecue, our OMC—Onward Manufacturing—made-right-here-in-Ontario barbecue by Ontario workers.

I've got to tell you, I talked to Joe. Joe's smart. Joe has been installing windows for a good chunk of time. He knows his business; he knows it well. He's proud of his work, as he should be. He's an exceptional, skilled craftsman. His workers are top-notch.

But you see, things are going to slow down in short order because eventually, there's going to be the sticker-shock phenomenon of 8% in terms of installation—the labour component.

The same with Rona lumber. Lord knows, I wish the Tomiucks and Rona lumber well. I'm quite capable of spending a Saturday morning, no lunch break, through to 1 o'clock in a hardware store like that, just pretending as if I know what I'm doing, but I know Porter-Cable when I see it, I can tell you that. But you see, in that business as well, the renovations and the fixing-uppings that have been going on over the last year and a half by people who aren't buying new houses anymore because they can't afford to—there has been some big slowdown in new house construction, hasn't there? That fixing-upping is going to slow down, too.

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So you see, I worry about the hundreds of people who couldn't get jobs at Rona. I worry about good entrepreneurs like Joe DiMarco at Universal Windows, who provide good jobs and do good, competent, quality service for families down in Niagara region. I worry for their well-being, because this HST is not going to serve them well. In some respects, that's the dirty little secret, because you ain't seen nothing yet. Why, the first boot has barely hit the floor, never mind the second boot. Things are tough out there for folks. All the chatty and, good God, the cliché-ridden—if you took the clichés out of that throne speech, why, it would fit on a quarter of a page of paper.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Not that much.

Mr. Peter Kormos: An eighth of a page of paper; I stand corrected by Ms. Elliott. If you took out the silly little clichés—"The world needs Ontario. Ontario needs the world." What the hell does that mean? I can tell you it means absolutely nothing to the folks down in Welland riding: in Wainfleet, Port Colborne, Welland, Thorold, St. Catharines, all the way through to Fort Erie and Fenwick. It means absolutely nothing to them. All they know is that they don't have jobs. "Retrain, retrain"—for what?

I'm going to talk about that, because we've got some stories coming out of Welland riding about the so-called retraining program; the Second Career program. My butt, second career. What are you going to do with 800 John Deere workers? Are you going to put tutus on them and send them down the road here to Toronto to dance the ballet? You can train them till the cows come home, but if there aren't jobs out there, all the training in the world comes to naught.

There was a time when the casino in Niagara Falls was the landing ground for people who lost their industrial jobs. Those men and women were trained to be blackjack dealers; they were trained to be mechanics and technicians for the one-armed bandits and the slot machines. It was a soft landing spot for some of those folks. The problem is, the casino is laying people off now. There are no jobs at the casino.

So, first of all, the training program, the Second Career program, simply ain't working. I can tell you that and I'm going to talk about that. Jeez, I wish I had another hour. If these folks had only given me unanimous consent for another hour I'd be so grateful. But I'm going to talk about Second Career in due course. We're going to have a whole lot of chance this week to talk about Second Career.

Today, I want to pay tribute to some people who I am very proud of: people like Joe DiMarco and Steve and Grace Tomiuck and Jonas. I also want to explain why they are so important to me: Because being with them, their families and their workers helps me understand a whole lot better than I would have otherwise how tough it is for people out there. The six-digit salaries in this chamber, I think, have left many people a little too comfortable. It's not comfortable for a whole lot of Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to rise in this House and speak about the speech from the throne. In contrast to the honourable member from the third party, who just asked what "Ontario needs the world and the world needs Ontario" means, I must stress the point that in fact, the world needs Ontario and Ontario needs the world because the world is a small village now. What we do, the world needs, and we also need the world.

When you read the speech from the throne, you find several major initiatives in that document. The document itself, as it stands alone, is a road map. It's a general plan for the next five years in Ontario. It's the plan which will take Ontario to another plateau within five years. There are several elements, and as I said, you can easily find those elements in the document. I'm just going to speak to a few of them.

One of them is the creation of a new learning centre called the online institute. This new centre is going to provide easy access for students who want to learn to increase their knowledge, education and training in various areas and disciplines. They can easily reach it, through the Internet and modern technology, in their own leisure time with much less investment, to increase their knowledge, training and education. That is a new initiative in Ontario. Other provinces do have this kind of institution. The province of Alberta was the first. I think about 15 years ago, they came out with an online university called Athabasca University. Within this university, they provide master's degree programs. So this is what we are going to do in Ontario for the first time. This has been mentioned in the speech from the throne.

The other point on the education side is the creation of 20,000 new spots—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's always a pleasure to listen to the member for Welland. I didn't realize that he had a 1914 house. I lived in an old house like that once myself, and it's always a challenge to get home early enough to fix the things that broke that day. It's an ongoing challenge to live in an older house, because things can break at an awful pace when you live in an old house. The member for Oshawa is nodding her head. She lives in an older house as well. So you become very handy when you live in those kinds of houses.

The member speaks very eloquently about the plight that Ontario finds itself in. For six years, the grasshoppers on the government benches fiddled while the province and the manufacturing sector fiddled in this great province declined and fell away from the bones that make up this province. That was a shame.

We on this side of the House may have different solutions to the problem, but we agree on the problem. We warned the government at some length that bad times were coming, but it's a Liberal tradition to tax and spend. Peterson did it from 1985 to 1990 when he doubled the provincial budget. He started out with a \$24-billion

budget and he finished 1990 with a \$48-billion budget. This government took over with a \$67-billion deficit. Now, there was an NDP government in there and there was a Conservative government in there, and the budget only increased in those 12 years—\$48 million to \$68 million—by \$20 billion. But in the short six years that the Liberals have been in place, the budget is on track to almost double, and the debt that Ontario finds itself is also on track to double.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I was not on duty this afternoon to be here, but when I started to watch the television as I was working away at some files, I saw my colleague the member from Welland get to his feet, and I thought, "I cannot miss this." He has been away from this place too long. To listen to his tales, to listen to what he has to say about his neighbours and his friends of a bygone era, what he has to say about Port Colborne, Welland and Wainfleet, is something that ought not to be missed. I wish there were more in the House to witness this. So I ran up the stairs in order to partake because it was just such a long time that I haven't been able to watch him in full flight. The television does not do him the justice that he deserves. Even when I have to have his back to me, you can still watch the movements, the pondering and the eloquence with which he speaks.

He talks about the down-home wisdom and he talks about real people. I think that is what is often forgotten in this place. When you can put a name and a face to problems, when you can put a name and a face to what government policy actually accomplishes or fails to accomplish, it says much more than the statistics and other things that are bandied about in this House all the time or the greatness that certain people see in every political action. I don't know how often I hear that this government has done things that no other government in the world has done, that this government has fared better than any other government in the history of humankind, and on and on it goes. But when the member from Welland speaks, he talks about those real people, their real problems. He talks about the jobs that they want to keep. He talks about the opportunities that are now being denied of them.

I think we all need to listen. We all need to go back to our communities. We all need to rediscover those real people so that we can better represent them, and at least in the same way that he so ably does.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I too appreciate the comments from the member from Welland. He's very articulate and passionate. I also would like to congratulate his constituent Steve Tomiuck, who opened up the Rona lumber store in Welland, just as Mark Healy has opened up a Canadian Tire store in Mississauga. What it's telling me is that these individuals are investing a great deal of their money and investment because they have confidence in this province and in the future of this province.

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This throne speech spoke about how this province will be one of the lowest-cost jurisdictions in North America and around the world in terms of taxation. The tax reform will enable some stimulus to encourage these companies to invest in Ontario. Just as the local Home Hardware store in Clarkson has been surviving and has done its job, we too need both the small stores and the large stores. This throne speech speaks to the vision of Ontario, one that enables us to inspire economic stimulus and, above all, create jobs. These individuals aren't going to set up these big shops unless they're confident that there are going to be enough consumers to spend the money, money that will enable us to have strong education and strong health care, as well as improvements to our environment.

Part of this throne speech speaks about green jobs going forward and the protection of our environment. We can go on about the early years as well, because without education for the primary years, then we will have more jeopardy in the later years when these people become adults and are looking for those skilled jobs. The throne speech speaks about that as well.

I say to the honourable member, congratulations to your constituent, and congratulations to all who decide to invest in Ontario for the future, because this is about the future of Ontario. We need to encourage that stimulus and those investments, and this throne speech speaks to that. The budget coming forward will also do so.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Welland has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you to the people who responded to my brief comments. Look, why do I mention Joe DiMarco and Universal Windows and his supplier, A.C. Vinyl Windows, in Niagara Falls? Why do I mention John Deere? Because if we had a Buy Ontario policy in this province, we would have gone a long way already to saving a whole lot of jobs, and perhaps even restoring some of the jobs that have been lost. We have no leverage. This government had no leverage whatsoever with John Deere in the absence of a Buy Ontario policy. They couldn't say to John Deere, "We're not going to buy John Deeres anymore if they're not made in Ontario," because they never bought John Deeres because they were made in Ontario in the first place.

The lack of a Buy Ontario policy has put jobs at risk and hasn't just put them at risk, has eliminated those jobs, and many of those jobs, once they're gone, are never coming back. I tell you what: You talk to Steve Tomiuck who lived through one depression and is living through a second. He's down there in the south end with Welland Tubes and Page-Hersey and Union Carbide. Two of the three are now gone. He'll be the first to tell you that if you aren't in a community where workers are working, making money, they aren't buying anything. They aren't buying products and they aren't keeping small business alive—end of story. No matter how good that entrepreneur is, he can't give product away. Steve Tomiuck can tell you that if you don't have workers

making good wages in your community, small business can kiss its grits goodbye—end of story. Joe DiMarco will tell you that if you don't have workers making decent wages who can afford his quality services and a quality product made right there in Niagara Falls, he's not going to be installing windows. And that HST that Dalton McGuinty has whacked those people with isn't going to help. As sure as God made little apples, it ain't going to help. I invite people to go talk to those folks, real folks who understand how disastrous this government's policies are for the workers and families of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak to our Open Ontario plan today, and I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough Southwest.

I join with my colleagues in acknowledging the vibrant return of the member for Welland, and it's lovely that he hearkens back to the days when he had charm. We all hearken back to those days with you.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to our Open Ontario plan and to speak to the great initiatives and the hopeful signs that we have for opportunities and growth here in Ontario for the next five years. As you're well aware, over the last couple of years, as we've dealt with this worldwide economic downturn, we've made substantial investments in infrastructure to create jobs and to introduce new training programs for our workers. The infrastructure programs that we've introduced across the province and that we've seen roll out across the province have seen construction happening in each and every one of our ridings. In my riding of Nipissing, we've seen some great work being done to the sportsplex in Powassan, as the tenders have gone out for that. We are building a multisports complex in North Bay. We've seen the construction of roads and bridges in Mattawa, Bonfield, Chisholm and Nipissing, and we're also seeing the revamping of our Yes! employment office on Main Street in downtown North Bay. Yes! is the key service provider for training and educational opportunities for our young people and for those who have been displaced and are seeking training and future employment. It's good to see that Yes! will find itself in a new, refurbished home for all the programs and all the help it provides.

As we move forward, our new five-year Open Ontario plan is about opening up the province to new economic opportunities that will result in jobs and growth. We are creating new opportunities for jobs and growth by looking to the future, looking at new technology. As you know, we introduced the Green Energy Act, and that has created such a buzz internationally, across the country and here in the province, as we see so many green energy initiatives happening across the province. Locally in my town, we were so delighted two weeks ago to see that our local Independent Grocer, a subsidiary of the Loblaw chain, will be adopting solar panels. It's very exciting. It's quite a prominent store in our community, and it will

be exciting to see that happen and create a buzz about green energy in our community.

The member for Welland was so good about talking about individuals in his riding. Steve Draves, an individual in my riding, has been talking about solar panels and solar energy for quite some time. He has his own business, and he also teaches in the trades sector at Canadore College. He is telling me that he is incredibly busy with interest about applying solar panels to various people's roofs in homes and businesses. I'm excited to see that through the Green Energy Act we are supporting his green initiatives, but also allowing him and so many others to expand in green technology.

As we look at clean water, Madam Speaker, as you know, it's a huge, burgeoning industry across the country, but also around the world. As the member for Toronto Centre discussed, we have so many jurisdictions that are seeking clean water and will be seeking more clean water in the future. We are well positioned to be a centre of excellence for the development of clean water technology, and I'm excited at the prospects. I know that last week, when we introduced the Open Ontario plan through our throne speech, I received calls in my constituency office immediately about our clean water initiative. People are excited about these initiatives.

We're also turning to education, as we know that our greatest resource in this province is our human resource. We are trying, as we have for the last seven years, to continue to build a stronger economy by expanding educational opportunities in our schools, colleges, universities and trades. We are creating the world's most highly skilled and educated workforce. As you know, we start in the early years. We've introduced full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. Last week, while I was in my constituency, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of stakeholders, all of whom are very excited about this initiative and the impact it's going to have on our young people. We have also decreased our class sizes, our test scores are up and I think we announced just today that more of our high school students are graduating.

All these initiatives are really important as our young people go forward and become the workforce of the future. I look at our pages, and Anthony Caliciuri—I think he might have gone off to school—is one of my constituents who is here today. His mom, Mary Beth, was here with us; she just stepped out. What we're doing is creating a future and creating opportunities for these young people in areas that we know are going to grow in the future—in new technology. We're also expanding the opportunities they will have, in the not-too-distant future, in our colleges and universities over the next few years. We are going to expand enrolment in our colleges and universities by 20,000 places.

On Thursday of last week, I was at Nipissing University, which is in the great city of North Bay, and we welcomed Seymour Schulich to Nipissing University. As many in this House will know, he is a philanthropist, a nationally known entrepreneur and someone who has

done a great deal for post-secondary education across the country. He has endowed faculties in various universities across the country. He has endowed the faculty of law at Dalhousie, which is now the Schulich School of Law, the Schulich School of Business at York, the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry at Western, the Schulich School of Music at McGill and, as of last Thursday, the Schulich School of Education at Nipissing University.

Mr. Schulich has endowed the university with \$15 million—a huge investment for Nipissing University—providing 100 scholarships of \$6,000 per student to students starting next year, as well as investing in the faculty and in different programs in the faculty, some with a particular interest in our aboriginal peoples. It was a very exciting day at Nipissing, and I've got to tell you, the place was just electric with excitement as we looked forward to both these new investments as well as the prospect of expanding enrolment at Nipissing and Canadore through the initiatives of the Open Ontario plan.

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We're also building at Nipissing and Canadore. We're building a new library. It's a joint library. It's the only one in the province where a college and a university share—actually, we're the only co-located institutions in the province, and in this case they actually share the library. We're very excited about the learning library. The community has come out in great support in fundraising efforts, and the province is supporting the library to the tune of about \$19 million. As I was there last week for the Schulich announcement, we could see the walls going up. It's just incredibly exciting, providing yet another great opportunity to the students across the north who come to Nipissing and Canadore. As well, we welcome students from all over the province and all across the country.

We also welcome international students. As our Open Ontario plan looks towards welcoming more foreign-born students to our faculties across the province, I am excited at the prospect of expanding those foreign spots in Nipissing and Canadore. Presently at Canadore College, our aeRonautics centre provides training to a number of students from China. I know that at Nipissing University we have a number of students through the world university student program, WUSP. They are very excited at both the prospect of expanding enrolment of our foreign-born students and providing those opportunities—and a great learning opportunity for our students to share the classroom with people from different cultures, different backgrounds and a different point of view.

We're also working towards, as we develop these new programs and as we move towards the future and adopt new technology and support new industries and new technology, the elimination of our deficit. We don't want to leave our children with that burden. The members opposite spoke ever so eloquently about deficits. In fact, they should know, as they left with us a \$5.6-billion deficit when we took office in 2003. As you know, over

the years we managed to reduce that deficit. Now, as every jurisdiction in North America and almost every jurisdiction around the world has managed to create a deficit through these difficult economic times, we too are looking at how to deal with that. We will be doing that in a reasonable, gradual, responsible way, ensuring that all of our core services that Ontarians have grown to rely on are consistently kept up, but also making sure that we don't leave that legacy to our children.

I think the Open Ontario plan is an incredibly exciting plan for the province and for opportunities across the province, but nowhere, I think, do we capture that better than in the north. As you know, I spoke earlier about the north and about the Ring of Fire and the potential that the chromite deposits of the Ring of Fire bring to the north and to industry in the north, to our students in the north who are studying, and to various First Nations communities who stand to benefit from this find. I am very excited at the prospects.

I have to tell you, two weeks ago I was at the prospectors' conference, which was held at the Metro Convention Centre. I believe there were 22,000 registered participants at the prospectors' conference. It's the largest in the world. We were so ably represented there in my riding by the folks from Boart Longyear, Sandvik, Cementation, Foraco, and one other that slips my mind, but they were all huge employers in our region who are developing new products and producing those products and selling them around the world. As an example, the one that slipped my mind—Atlas Copco launched a new product, a new diamond bit at the conference, to a world-wide audience, and were there to sell it. They produce it in Ontario, in North Bay. Boart Longyear, the representatives, were telling me that they are hiring up and taking on new staff and are very excited with the prospects.

We do see development. We do see the economy starting to turn and, with that, bring optimism for the province and for the people of this province. I think the Open Ontario plan supports that initial hope that we are seeing around the world. I know that it's providing hope and encouragement to the people of Ontario.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Scarborough—Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak for a few minutes on the throne speech and the Open Ontario plan. I'm going to use a small analogy in these few minutes that I have to speak, and that is to take Sherlock Holmes from the 1800s and bring him to the present day in this chamber, show him our Open Ontario plan and ask him, "Mr. Holmes, what do you see in this plan? What do you think?" He'd look at the plan, and probably one of the first things he'd notice is that we're going to create 600,000 more jobs in Ontario. One would wonder how that is going to happen. We are basically, through our Open Ontario plan, bringing our taxation system into line with the 21st century and bringing opportunities for businesses to flourish in Ontario. People look at the HST as being only

negative, yet someone who looks more carefully at it will see that there are going to be 600,000 new jobs. That's not coming from us, the government; that's coming from independent economists who have said that.

The other thing that would be interesting is that someone like Sherlock Holmes would see Samsung coming to Ontario, and he'd scratch his head and say, "Why would Samsung come to Ontario? Why would Samsung decide to invest \$7 billion and create 2,500 megawatts of clean power and 16,000 Ontario jobs?" The reason, again, is because we have the Open Ontario plan. It's already partly in place through the fact that we have put the Green Energy Act to work at this time. This is a tremendous achievement. Samsung could have gone anywhere. They could have opened in California, they could have opened in Tennessee or they could have opened in British Columbia. But they chose Ontario, and that's the key: We've created a fertile environment where companies want to come and open—not only Samsung but other businesses as well.

We have to compete against the rest of the world. Businesses can pick up and move, as we've seen. A lot of the auto sector has moved to countries like Mexico and elsewhere. We need to compete with other countries and provide something better. In this plan, we begin to distill and find certain things that make business attractive for people who want to work in Ontario. There are all sorts of components that this plan has put forward that allow businesses to open up here.

I think the fact that the plan wants us to include a financial centre, to make Toronto one of North America's financial centres, is also important. It will create a number of jobs, as people will want to open up their banking operations here in Toronto and Ontario rather than in other parts of the country or the world. It's an important idea, and I think the foundations are already there.

The idea that we're going to have a new Water Opportunities Act means that we're going to have all sorts of new clean water technology. Earlier speakers have spoken to the fact that water is such a precious commodity. Well, we've decided through this plan—again, going back to Sherlock Holmes, if he was to look at this and look at this Water Opportunities Act, he would say, "Interesting. It appears that this is going to create jobs in the future. This is going to create new technologies in the future." It's also going to create all sorts of new opportunities for young people who want to get into this field and work in this area.

The plan goes on to do much more, of course. In education, we are launching, and have launched, the Second Career program. It's a first for Canada, because it supports up to two years of long-term training. All I have to do is speak to the president of Centennial College. Her name is Ann Buller, and I have talked to her on several occasions about Second Career. They are thrilled in Scarborough, as they are throughout Ontario, to have opportunities to bring people back to school, retrain them and put them back into the workforce. It isn't something

that is esoteric or that could happen; it is happening right now. There are people who are being trained as I speak. There are classrooms open in Scarborough, Scarborough Southwest, Centennial College and elsewhere where people are retraining, learning new skills, re-entering the workforce with those new skills and working in fields they didn't work in before.

As you begin to get through the layers here, you begin to see an underlying theme. That theme is that there is a plan here. The plan is to create a fertile environment to allow businesses, individuals and residents to prosper here in Ontario. We have no choice.

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We could sit back, I guess, and do nothing. That choice is a bad choice, because in the past, when depressions or recessions have taken place, the governments that haven't moved have always failed. I look to the United States, for example. We talk about what happened during the Great Depression there. Before Roosevelt came into government, Herbert Hoover was the first President to sort of experience a large depression. He sat back and did nothing. He was swept out of office. Roosevelt came into power, and he immediately began to bring infrastructure ideas into the government plan.

We've done the same thing here. We did it a while back, and we're continuing to do it. Over \$32 billion is being invested in roads, bridges, public transit, and energy retrofits for our schools. This means, again, thousands of jobs for people who will be working in the infrastructure section doing this type of work. It's an extraordinary measure, and it is coordinated with the federal government and with partners who were interested in being involved in the infrastructure.

I know that in my riding there are several projects under way, and throughout Ontario there are hundreds of projects under way. People are working, the cranes are up, and the contractors are out there building and creating, refurbishing and fixing all sorts of infrastructure items.

Again, the global recession struck and Ontario found itself in a difficult situation. This government, the Liberal government here, decided to act, and I strongly support the actions that this government has taken. It's something that is unique, in that we are saying, "We're not afraid. We're going to go forward. We have a plan. We're going to make some changes. It might hurt a little bit, but in the end, Ontario is going to be a leader in a lot of different areas," whether it be clean water or whether it be in all sorts of other technologies, innovations, new skilled workers, and the list goes on and on and on.

Perhaps some people are critical of us for taking action, but at least one thing cannot be said: No one can say that we did not take action. The action that we are taking is well thought out. As I said, it's woven, and it weaves back to some of the earlier things that we did with the Green Energy Act, which was passed even before this plan was put forward. This plan incorporates the Green Energy Act and brings it forward, as well as

the items to do with education, which was mentioned earlier by the government House leader, and the early learning program, the full-day kindergarten program, which also helps people to go out there and work while their children are kept in school.

In summary, I think if someone like Sherlock Holmes looked at this plan, he would say, "Well done." He would say it's a proper way to go forward. He would say it's very thorough. There is not much more that I can think of that we can do to help make Ontario the best province and the best place in the world.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member spoke about the non-event of the throne speech, and it was disappointing to hear that throne speech being talked about as being a document that created something, because it really didn't. It was a very hollow document, one of the most hollow throne speeches, I think, that I've experienced in the House in my nearly 15 years in this place.

Talking about the action, he mentioned that there was some criticism that the government took action. Well, the action the government took wasn't very exciting, and I don't think the criticism was aimed at the government for taking action. It was the type of action the government took that we were critical of. The type of action they took didn't address the problems that are facing Ontario today: the loss of jobs, the loss of work. The programs that they've introduced have been underfunded and understaffed. There have been huge numbers of people who are unemployed and retraining programs that wouldn't entertain 10% of the unemployed workers. It's just far too little and it came far too late in the day for it to be effective in the way in which Ontario has faced this terrible recession that we're in and that we were very poorly prepared for. The government twiddled their thumbs for six years of their mandate, and even after the recession hit they took no decisive action for months afterwards. It was as if they were surprised that the recession came.

I understand the member is speaking from the government benches, and it must be difficult to speak to a throne speech that produces so little for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I listened intently to the government's explanation—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Apology.

Mr. Paul Miller: It was more of an apology than an explanation, I must say. But I'd like them to talk to the people in my community on the street. I'd like them to talk to the thousands and thousands of people who have lost their jobs in the last few years. Just to name some of the companies that have left, major employers in the province: International Harvester; Otis Elevator; Westinghouse; John Inglis; American Can; Dominion Glass; Canada Works; Frost Fence; 80% of Stelco; Procter and Gamble; Camco; the 20-inch mill; Parkdale Works—the list goes on and on and on. These are

Hamilton-based companies that have pulled out. We've lost 20,000 jobs, and I have seen no indication of any job growth in the manufacturing sector in my city.

Now the *pièce de résistance*: A company with a 110-year history in the city of Hamilton—Siemens—is pulling out with 600 jobs and going to North Carolina. Why? Because they have incentives in North Carolina: free land, free buildings, free taxes for five years.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: Union-busting.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's a state that doesn't allow unions too. It's a work-to-right state.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Right-to-work; sorry.

Then you've got John Deere, another company in Welland pulling out. I've seen all kinds of companies folding day after day in this province; week after week there are new announcements. So if this program they've got is so great, if it's so wonderful and it's going to make our province boom, why are these major companies that have been here for 100 years pulling out now when everything is going to be rosy, everything is going to be great?

I'll tell you what will help the province: Maybe you should do something about your hydro rates. Maybe you should Buy Ontario. Maybe you should have 50% content in Canadian manufacturing. That might do something to keep the jobs here—not all, I don't know, this featherweight stuff.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker, I should say. I apologize.

It was a delight to hear from my colleagues the member from Nipissing and the member from Scarborough Southwest. They took the time this afternoon to clearly identify activities that are going on in their ridings as a result of our Green Energy Act, and opportunities that will certainly come about through the throne speech.

I guess essentially, being a former municipal politician, you often look at the throne speech as the official plan of a community. You provide the broad-brush strokes of how a community may develop over a period of time, and then you have the comprehensive zoning bylaw, which is really the nuts and bolts to implement the philosophical base that is clearly articulated in the official plan. That's what we see this Thursday at 4 o'clock. The Honourable Dwight Duncan will deliver his budget, and we're looking forward to seeing those details in the budget that will implement some of the elements that were identified in the official plan.

I take the opportunity when I'm in my great riding of Peterborough to go over to the East City Coffee Shop. It's on one of the largest spans, concrete bridges, in the British Commonwealth. In fact, we're going to rehabilitate this bridge this spring through monies that have been brought forward by the government of Ontario, the government of Canada, and indeed the city of Peterborough. When you talk to the folks at East City Coffee Shop—as I like to remind everybody, you can get a

Western and a cup of coffee for about \$4.75. It's absolutely delightful. It's cooked by the local folks there; they're great friends of mine. You get a chance to talk to the folks who work at Quaker Oats right across the street, who have been involved in Peterborough for over a hundred years. We made an announcement just recently to help their production capacity, to improve job opportunities at that manufacturer in Peterborough as well as General Electric and Siemens, and the list goes on and on.

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I'm glad we heard from my colleagues—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments? There being no more questions and comments, the member from Scarborough Southwest has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: On behalf of the government House leader and myself, who spoke for the last 20 minutes or so, I want to thank the member from Halton, the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and the member from Peterborough for their comments.

Again, I want to reiterate the fact that this document that we have, the Open Ontario plan, which is the speech from the throne, has a plan. It has a vision, and it outlines that plan very carefully. All you have to do is read it. It's not a very long document. It's barely 16 pages long. It lays out a very, very clear agenda for an open Ontario, for an Ontario that wants to invite people to come here; for an Ontario that wants to bring foreign students here, and create new universities and perhaps add on to universities so that foreign students come here to learn and get their degrees; an Ontario that wants new companies like Samsung, which is going to create thousands of new jobs located right here in Ontario, and that has a Green Energy Act that will create new, green technologies.

We want to be in the forefront of these areas. We know that the world has changed. We know that certain businesses are going to have a difficult time continuing to exist, so what we need to do is to provide a landing pad: a place where people can open up new businesses and where entrepreneurs can come to this province. This plan makes it very clear what this government intends to do.

The \$32 billion for infrastructure alone is an incredible investment that we've made here in Ontario to try to bring brand new bridges, roads and subways right into this province. We're not sitting still. We're not sitting pat. We are moving.

I am excited when I look at this document. I think of what the future will bring for the young people and all the others who live here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This throne speech showed a government that has lost their way because they have spent too long in their ivory towers in Toronto; a government that is disconnected and out of touch with the people of Ontario. As Christina Blizzard said, "It's Dalton in Wonderland." He thinks that people will be

satisfied with vague platitudes and reannouncements—and incidentally, we've heard the government mention the fact that this is going to create a million new jobs. Every one of those jobs in the throne speech has been announced prior. They were supposed to be the jobs that were announced in the last throne speech, when they in fact lost over 100,000 jobs. So I guess that goes to the amount of confidence that we can put into this throne speech.

The Premier thinks people will be satisfied with vague platitudes, but the families who have one or even two parents out of work and are struggling to make ends meet need more. The farmers who are losing money every day and expecting the bank to foreclose soon need more. The seniors—and incidentally, it wasn't mentioned in the throne speech—on fixed incomes who are scared that the HST will force them out of their homes need more. The government had an opportunity to create a real plan to get Ontarians back on track and missed the opportunity.

The McGuinty Liberals are faced with a record-breaking \$24.7-billion deficit, but if you listened only to the throne speech you'd think everything was ticking along nicely in this province. This government is on a steady course to double the provincial debt by 2013. Since the McGuinty Liberals came to office, Ontario's debt has grown by \$65 billion. It took 23 Premiers and 136 years to get us to \$148 billion in debt, and Dalton McGuinty would single-handedly double that debt in just eight years. On a per-household basis, this means every single family in Ontario is saddled with more than \$13,500 of the McGuinty Liberals' debt, yet the throne speech hardly addresses it. The people of Ontario expect more from a government than to mortgage the future of our children.

However, I will admit the McGuintys have come up with one money-making plan; unfortunately, it may be at the expense of our children. According to a recent Toronto Star article, Ontario now hosts 38,000 foreign students. The throne speech laid out a goal of increasing that by 50% over the next five years. Dalton McGuinty might call it "Open Ontario," but I'd call it "desperate Ontario."

The government of Ontario's proposal is that international students, who pay almost triple, become cash cows of our cash-strapped university system. It runs the risk that Ontario and Canadian students will be pushed out of the post-secondary education system by cash-heavy foreign students, who pay almost triple the tuition fees.

I hope that there are enough student spaces for some of my Liberal colleagues to go back to school, because they need to work on their math skills. They are creating 20,000 new student spaces, but if they are successful in attracting the number of foreign students they want, that will fill 19,000 of those spaces and leave a grand total of 1,000 extra student spaces for our Ontario children—only 1,000 extra spaces to deal with the overcrowding and the people who are currently being turned away from schools in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

These student spaces are not a new, forward-looking plan; they are a reaction to the problem that the McGuinty government has already created. People in Ontario are losing their jobs. Under Dalton McGuinty, Ontario has lost 279,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs; 140,000 jobs were lost in 2009 alone. Incidentally, that was the year they were supposed to create a million jobs since that last throne speech.

High taxes and a challenging economy are forcing our businesses to close or move to more competitive locations. As a result, many Ontarians are going back to school to try and train for a new job. College applications are up 14.5% overall since January 2009, 22.8% for non-secondary school applicants. Some colleges, such as Northern College in northwestern Ontario, where mining and forestry sectors have collapsed, are experiencing an increase of 47%.

In the throne speech, the McGuinty government claimed that "every qualified Ontarian who wants to go to college or university will find a place." Well, their math simply doesn't add up. This is already shaping up to be another broken promise to the students, just like the promise in the 2007 throne speech where they said that they would give a \$300 grant each year to help with the cost of textbooks. No, they didn't.

In the throne speech, the McGuinty government pointed to the Second Career program and talked about its successes. While he included one positive story, he doesn't mention the many stories that we hear every day, people calling who are frustrated by the red tape—people like the mother of two who was trying to go back to school. It took so long to get the approval from Second Career that all the daytime classes were full, leaving her with evening courses and no daycare options. Or people like hospitality student Derek Baker, who waited from September to December for funding approval. In January, having already paid George Brown College \$145 to hold his spot, Baker could wait no longer and started classes, even though he couldn't afford the tuition. Last time he spoke to his career counsellor, she told him that he would have to drop out because Second Career funding isn't available to those already students.

Derek was a bike mechanic who was laid off at Duke's Cycle after the store burned down during the 2008 Queen Street fire. He said, "All I want to do is learn and contribute.... You guys are telling me that in order to go to school I can't go to school—are you crazy?" That was his quote.

People like Derek were looking for real solutions in this speech. People in my riding who are worried about the impact of the HST were hoping that in this speech, the government would explain how we are supposed to afford an extra 8% on everything from gasoline to hydro to home heating fuel. This tax increase will be applied to hundreds of things that Ontarians use every day.

I know that many seniors rely on services like snow removal, lawn care and home repair to allow them to stay in their own homes. Now the cost of all those services will be increased by 8% as well.

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Our farmers are worried about the HST too. They're worried about the impact of losing the point-of-sale exemption. They can't afford to pay the sales tax and wait months to get that money back. They need the money to operate. Instead of announcements to help farmers, the government chose to largely ignore them in this throne speech, with just 51 words and no new assistance. In fact, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's commentary on the throne speech said, "Anyone looking for an at-length mention of agriculture or farming in the recent Ontario throne speech was most likely left disappointed or cold."

I can imagine how delighted Ontario farmers and growers will be to hear that there is still no room for them in the Premier's agenda. The McGuinty government has been ignoring the needs of Ontario farmers for several years, and the longer they ignore them, the more desperate their needs become.

A few weeks ago, I questioned the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on this government's lack of support for our farmers. I started by saying that Premier McGuinty was set to announce a new set of priorities in his next throne speech and that Ontario farmers are still waiting for him to deliver on the promises he made in the last one.

In the 2007 throne speech, the Premier promised to help grain and oilseed farmers. Today, they are no better off. The McGuinty government has ended the grain and oilseeds risk management pilot program even though it was a success.

On the night of the throne speech, I had the privilege of going to the grain farmers' convention in London. The minister spoke, and the farmers were left confused. If the government supports them, as she claims, why would they end a program that works? For the last three years, the province and the farmers have funded the program jointly, and it worked.

Now the Minister of Agriculture claims that it can't continue without the federal government adding to the provincial portion. The farmers can't understand why. Nothing has changed other than that the minister has simply decided not to participate.

The other question they kept asking was why they would cut the grain and oilseeds program when the McGuinty government was the one promoting it. Former Agriculture Minister Leona Dombrowsky directed Ontario commodity groups to come together to create a consensus proposal for a risk management plan, and they did everything they were asked to do. They created a plan modelled on the grain and oilseeds program. They are speaking with one voice. They are telling the Ontario government what they need, and the government is making excuses.

They claim they won't participate without the federal government. They have forgotten that these are Ontario farmers, that Ontario has a responsibility to support them. They're ignoring the fact that our farmers are competing against people of other provinces who do have the support of their provincial governments. If the Minister

of Agriculture spent more time talking and, even more importantly, listening to the farmers, she would know that the federal-provincial tug-of-war is of no interest to them. They have no time to decide whose fault it is; they simply want to work hard and make sure their work is rewarded and supported by government.

I'm tired of asking, but I will do it again. When is the McGuinty government going to stop making excuses and take action to help our farmers? We are waiting not just for an answer but for action. It's almost the end of the fiscal year. We know that last year, because of flaws with support programs, Ontario farmers, even those losing money, failed to qualify for all the support they deserved and the money that had been allocated specifically for them.

This government had a choice on what to do with that money. It could design a program that would help farmers, but instead, it chose to quietly reallocate \$82 million to other priorities.

The McGuinty government has done nothing to solve the problem with the program this year, so once again they will be faced with a choice. I hope this time they will choose to help the struggling farmers. They have known about the problems with the support programs for a long time.

In the 2005 throne speech, the McGuinty government said that it "continues to act on concerns regarding the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program." That's the program that didn't trigger and the province had \$82 million left over. Since that time, the program has been renamed, but the problems haven't been solved.

There are still hog farmers who have been losing money for several years and are unable to qualify for support. The program is still unable to deal with long-term crisis or a long-term drop in prices, and it is still failing Ontario's farmers.

In Dalton McGuinty's throne speech he talks proudly about "good things that grow in Ontario." I would like to remind the honourable members on the other side of the floor that these things don't just grow by themselves. Maybe they do in wonderland, but here in the real world we produce things, and we should reward our producers. "Reward" is too strong a word here; I should say, "help them survive," and in some cases, "help keep their lights on." This is a reality for some like Wayne Bartels, whose hydro was shut off a few months back. This is just the first of many farmers who will face these situations and be forced off their farms if they don't get help.

We respect farmers and treat them as equal partners. Not so in Dalton McGuinty's world, not according to a recently rushed Bill 204, the Animal Health Act, which creates a new system of licences and fees that do nothing to aid animal health and simply cause red tape and added expenses to farmers. Our farmers don't need more expenses and red tape; they need help. They are losing their farms and they are being forced out of business. Hog farmers rallied at the then-Minister of Agriculture's constituency office. They rallied at Queen's Park and they rallied at the federal-provincial-territorial meetings

in Niagara-on-the-Lake. How many more times do they need to tell this government that they are in trouble before someone listens and takes action? They were looking for answers in this throne speech. They were looking for a plan that would help them survive the tough times and help Ontario's agriculture industry grow. They were looking for the provincial government to step up with real commitments, not excuses.

Nothing for Ontario's farmers in an hour-long throne speech is not the only bad news I had to deliver to my community. I also had to explain that home safety isn't a priority for the McGuinty government. I had to explain when Dalton McGuinty prorogued the Legislature, killing my private member's bill called the Hawkins Gignac Act simply to have a flowery throne speech with no real plan and no major announcements. This bill would have required functioning carbon monoxide detectors in all Ontario homes, and it would have saved lives. I introduced this bill in the wake of a tragedy in Woodstock in which OPP constable Laurie Hawkins, her husband, Richard, and their two children, Cassandra and Jordan, were killed in their home by carbon monoxide poisoning.

We all know that when the Legislature prorogues, all current business, including bills and resolutions, is lost unless included in a carry-over motion by the government. The McGuinty government chose to move forward government bills but did not include the Hawkins Gignac Act. Isn't it ironic that today nobody would question the necessity of a smoke alarm in our homes, but we tend to overlook how important it is to protect ourselves from deadly gases such as carbon monoxide, an odourless, tasteless and colourless gas that is impossible to detect without this device? I don't know how many people would be excited about opening up Ontario if they were not safe in their own homes. It is unfortunate that because of this government's action we will have to start from scratch. I firmly believe that this bill will save lives, so I commit to reintroducing the Hawkins Gignac Act as soon as is practical.

It is almost three years ago that I brought forward a private member's resolution, one that dealt with the issue of taxation on diamond mines. You may remember that on the day the Victor mine was opened in northern Ontario, Dalton McGuinty's office issued a news release bragging about how low taxes were for the industry. In fact, he said, "Provincial tax rates for mining are among the lowest in Canada." Once the mine was opened, the McGuinty government almost tripled the diamond mine tax to 13%. This is the same government that claimed in the throne speech that they would build on that success and bring jobs to the north with the chromite mine. The McGuinty government has lost their credibility with the mining sector, and this government has lost their credibility with the people of Ontario.

Dalton McGuinty is still trying to mislead people, this time on health care. While I welcome the discussion on how we fund health care, I think that once again our Liberal friends are playing with the numbers—

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I thought I heard the honourable member say something unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I didn't hear that, but—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: If she heard something unparliamentary, I withdraw whatever she heard that was unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Is that satisfactory?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Yes, it is. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Continue.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: While I welcome the discussion on how we fund health care, I think that once again our Liberal friends are playing with the numbers. Once again, they seem to be relying on Liberal math. The reports are that this new patient-focused funding will direct more money into high-growth areas such as the 905. I know that many of those hospitals are underfunded given the population they serve, and I'm pleased that the McGuinty government is finally addressing the problem.

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My concern is that the same report indicated there will be no more money for health care. If that's true, then where is the money coming from? What will be cut? I suspect the answer is: from our smaller hospitals in rural and northern communities. In fact, in the article in the paper shortly after the throne speech, a group representing health professionals and hospital workers were quoted criticizing the proposal. I was particularly concerned about the part that said, "The Liberals are setting the stage for rural and northern hospital closures..." I would have hoped that the Premier could be honest with the people of Ontario, but instead we seem to hope that no one will notice. We believe the people of Ontario are smarter than that and they deserve better than what they are getting from this government.

I also want to point out what isn't in the throne speech. This speech was to have laid out the plan of where Ontario is going and what changes are going to affect Ontarians. It neglected to mention that just nine days later the government would put a new regulation into effect that would cost Ontario taxpayers over \$53 million on their hydro bill. This regulation would apply the cost of the McGuinty's government's Green Energy Act on all hydro bills, similar to the way that the debt retirement charges are collected. This new regulation appeared on the government website on March 17, but in the hour-long speech the government gave on March 8, there was no mention of this tax—just like they forgot to mention the HST in previous speeches.

The McGuinty government has demonstrated they don't have a plan. They have shown that they are out of ideas and simply don't know how to get Ontario back on track. They are simply enjoying their entitlements and rewarding their Liberal friends, all at the expense of the Ontario taxpayer.

On this side of the floor, we have a different approach. The PC caucus has been talking to the people of Ontario.

Our leader has met with the farmers, with small business people and with middle-class families to listen to them and find out what they need from their government, what we can do to help them succeed and where government needs to go or get out of their way.

I have found one thing from the throne speech: It seems to me this government is unable to multi-task. They can't seem to be looking to the future and look at today. They forgot all about the situation today in Ontario and decided they were going to plan for the future, with no inclination, no watching what they were going to do to the people of the province. That's why I'm totally opposed to this throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to congratulate my colleague in the Conservative Party; we share the responsibilities of agriculture and food critic. And I want to thank him for highlighting what is in fact happening in rural and small-town Ontario.

People in small-town and rural Ontario are not being fooled by this government. In fact, their health care services are being cut, are being reduced. This government talks about making things more efficient, but when 19-year-old patients have to be sent to a home for the aged three hours away—in this case from Kenora to Fort Frances—because the LHIN says that they're not going to open up any more of the available long-term-care beds in Kenora, then people know that their health services are being cut. When people have to wait not a month, not two months, not three months, not four months, but five months to get an appointment with their family physician; when people have to travel to towns and cities in Manitoba to get a family physician, people in small-town and rural and northern Ontario know that under this government, despite all of the boasting, the back-slapping and the propaganda that they put out, their health services are being cut.

I also want to congratulate my Conservative colleague for pointing out what is in fact happening with farmers. This government would have you believe that farmers are doing well. Well, I've met with representatives of the hog industry; they're hurting badly. Many don't know if they're going to survive. They don't see a path forward. I think some of them were hoping to see some light in the throne speech—an issue totally ignored. Beef farmers still suffering from the events of five, six, and seven years ago, hoping to see some direction in the throne speech—they were totally ignored. And across northern Ontario, where tens of thousands of good jobs have been destroyed under this government, you've got three paragraphs about the Ring of Fire, something that might—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: The throne speech, Open Ontario: Contrary to what I've heard from the other side of the House, where they're preaching fear, where they're preaching depression, where they're preaching anger, what this throne speech represents is hope, ambition and

above all, confidence. It's confidence in the people of Ontario to rise to the occasion over the next five years with the foundation, help and assistance that this government is going to provide in its Open Ontario program. The throne speech, Open Ontario, represents the very best that the people of Ontario can muster up in admittedly difficult circumstances. If we have the confidence, the ambition and the hope that we can turn things around over the next five years, this government will help the people turn this province around. It will help the people deal with the \$24-billion deficit.

I dare say that at the end of the five-year period, when we look back on this time period right now, the spring of 2010, we will see that one of the benchmarks, one of the starting points, was the throne speech, Open Ontario. The people of Ontario have so much to offer, all of the new immigrants—the skills and the ambitions that 13 million citizens of Ontario have. When we all get together and pull together we will turn this economy around, and five years from now you members—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member for Oxford for his many remarks. He's got a lot of years of experience in agriculture, being a former Minister of Agriculture. He especially zeroed in and talked about, in his remarks, the special difficulties in agriculture today.

Last week, during constituency week, I met with a number of farm groups, producers and livestock haulers, and they, to an individual, talked about the continuous regulations in Ontario. They're inundated with inspectors, making it tough for them to do business, and I'm sure the member for Oxford, in his remarks, touched on a lot of that as well.

He talked about the failure to renew the grain and oilseed funding to the farmers who are going to need that the most; also, about the many issues that producers meet every day in trying to make a living in this province. It's difficult when you go out there every day.

My father was in small business many years ago, and one adage he taught me was, "When the farmers have a good year, I always have a good year." He was a drainage contractor. At the time, he said that when the farmers do well, they always spend money. They don't put it in the bank. They either clear trees off a drain or they put in a municipal drain, they make improvements to their buildings, which all add to the economy.

As far as this Open Ontario, I think it's an open-and-shut case that this throne speech is a failure. That's the only open thing I see in this Open Ontario. It's a failure. It has been proven many times by many speakers in this House, from all parties, that that's the case, and I think as we hear more of the debate on the throne speech, that will be proven more.

Again, I'd like to thank the member from Oxford for his remarks, and I look forward to the rest of the afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I listened carefully to the member from Oxford. It's interesting; I don't know why, but I'm on the email list for the mayor of Woodstock, Mayor Mike. He always sends me emails talking about how Toyota has been such a big boost to that community as they work through their quality problems, which they inevitably will. He talks about the associate businesses that have been coming to Woodstock as a result of that investment in Toyota, which is a good thing for the riding of Oxford and the city of Woodstock. We all welcome that on all sides of the House.

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But I really have a question today. From time to time, I pick up the Waterloo Region Record. I want to quote from the March 8 edition. It said:

"Some Tories Question Stand on HST....

"However, some party members"—they're talking about the recent convention down in Ottawa—"seemed concerned that Hudak's refusal to commit to scrapping the 13% harmonized sales tax is a somewhat confusing message when he is so opposed to the HST.

"When people find out that I'm a PC, customers or friends, their first question is: Tim Hudak and the PCs say they're against this but they won't repeal it," said one delegate who didn't give his name but identified himself as a small business owner. "Can you expand a little bit more on what we can do to help in response to those questions we're getting hammered" on every day about the HST and the inconsistent stand?

That's quoted from the great newspaper, the Waterloo Region Record. I know a number of members over there read it faithfully every day, and for some unknown reason they missed this particular article dated March 8, 2010. I encourage the official opposition to read about one of their own delegates at that Ottawa meeting.

The member from Oxford made a few points, but essentially we want to know their stand on the HST.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank my colleagues from Kenora—Rainy River, Willowdale, Sarnia—Lambton and Peterborough for their kind comments.

I want to first of all thank the member from Kenora—Rainy River for his comments about the agriculture community and the challenge it is facing and for reiterating some of the challenges with the cattle producers and the hog producers that have been going on for quite a period of time. The government has done nothing about it, the same as the member from Sarnia—Lambton mentioning the challenge that has been there for some time and nothing has been done about it. I just point that out.

I would find it more interesting if the member from Willowdale and the member from Peterborough had also said that they had heard from the agriculture community and knew about the problems and that they too were working on trying to come up with some solution to those problems. It seems that their comments are totally away from the issue at hand and they want to talk about other things.

I think the comments from the member from Peterborough were interesting, talking about getting hammered by the comments about the HST. I can understand it. I'm getting hammered with comments about the HST. I can't understand that any government, after hearing that much hammering, would still be interested in implementing the HST.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough; the member from Barrie. Order.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank them for—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a second. It's very difficult to hear the comments from the member from Oxford, so could you please come to order?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I think this is an important issue and I want to say that I am really shocked with the number of comments that are coming out from the people almost universally opposing the HST. I cannot understand that any member of the government would want to bring that topic up, because it's not a matter of what happens to it in the future; the people I talk to today want to know why anybody—and they actually do this—in their right mind would impose the HST on the people of Ontario today. I find it strange that he would bring that up during this debate. But I do want to thank him for the comments, and I do want to say that with Toyota being in Oxford, the growth has been very good for our community, and we're very happy to have them there.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I have to think that whoever drafted this throne speech, when they decided to title it Open Ontario, was obviously not thinking about what's happening in northern Ontario, obviously not thinking about what has transpired in northern Ontario under the McGuinty government over the last five years.

The government says "Open Ontario," so I look at what is happening in northern Ontario towns: Marathon, Ontario, pulp mill closed—not open; Terrace Bay, Ontario, pulp mill shut down—not open; Longlac, particleboard mill closed, chipboard mill closed, sawmill closed; Nipigon, plywood mill closed; Red Rock, containerboard mill closed; Nakina, sawmill closed; Atikokan, sawmill closed, particleboard mill closed; Ignace, sawmill closed; Sioux Lookout, sawmill closed; Ear Falls, sawmill closed; Kenora, sawmill closed, two paper machines closed, OSB mill only operating half-time; Thunder Bay alone—Bowater paper mill, two machines closed, one pulp mill closed, Abitibi Mission paper mill closed, Cascades paper mill closed, Stone container plant closed, three sawmills closed. Dryden, the most modern paper mill complex in all of North America, with over \$5 billion of new investment in the last 16 years, closed; both paper machines closed.

I look at Sudbury. The government now somehow wants to boast about mining. What I see in Sudbury is over 3,000 miners on the picket line. I look at the copper refinery that used to be located in Sudbury—moved to Quebec. Why? Because the company simply decided it was cheaper for them to mine the copper in Sudbury, ship it to Quebec, and have it smelted and refined there. Why? The differential in hydro rates.

I look at what is about to unfold at Xstrata in Timmins, where Xstrata is going to close down the most modern metallurgical processing plant in Ontario and move the 700 direct jobs and 1,300 direct jobs to Quebec. Why? Because of the differential in industrial hydro rates. They will save literally \$50 million a year simply by moving the jobs—the processing, the smelting, the refining—to Quebec.

The government has the audacity to speak about Open Ontario, but what people see in my part of the province is nothing that is open. Things have closed, are closing, or have announced to be closed. People are not thinking about what might happen in 10 years. They're not even concerned right now about five years. They are concerned about putting food on the table today. They are concerned about being able to pay the hydro bill at the end of the month. They are concerned about being able to buy winter clothes for their kids. They are concerned about being able to buy a new pair of running shoes for their kids to go to school. I know many of them were hoping in this throne speech to see a government that had a plan to address some of these things.

You know what, Speaker? There are all of four paragraphs on northern Ontario—all of four paragraphs. Do you know what it was? A vague reference to the Ring of Fire. But do you know what was astounding about the vague reference to the Ring of Fire? As the government was here boasting about something that might possibly happen five or 10 years from now in the Ring of Fire—and it will take that long—what's actually happening and was happening at the Ring of Fire is that the First Nations who live there were blockading and protesting against what the government was boasting about. The First Nations were blockading and protesting. So even with what the government was offering up as its vision for northern Ontario, the very First Nation people who live right in the Ring of Fire were saying, "If we're not consulted, if our rights and interests are not considered, then this is not going to go ahead."

I can't say this too strongly. The government talks about what might happen 10 years from now or what might happen five years from now. This government has no clue what could happen five years from now or 10 years from now, and trying to offer that up as some sort of illusion to people just demonstrates to me how misguided this government is. The issues are now.

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I go to the community of Dryden, the most modern paper mill complex in all of Canada, over \$5 billion of new investment in the last 16 years: totally automated wood-handling procedures; brand new, high-speed, large

paper machines; totally automated paper cutting, paper packaging, paper shipping, paper finishing; brand new recovery boiler—\$750 million—state-of-the-art technology. That complex, six years ago, employed 1,100 people. Today it employs 300 people. The paper machines are shut down. Do you know what's really troubling? The company, Domtar, continues to harvest the forest. They continue to harvest the jack pine and the spruce. They run it through the pulp mill, turn out semi-processed pulp, ship the semi-processed pulp to their paper mills in the United States, and they now make the paper there.

This government talks about Open Ontario. What it's done in Dryden, primarily as a result of its electricity policy driving up industrial hydro rates, is simply take the best jobs, the jobs that require the highest skill, the paper machine jobs, and ship those to the United States. So we produce the wood fibre, we continue to harvest the trees, we semi-process them into pulp, and now it's shipped to the southern United States, where the skilled jobs, the high-technology jobs, the best jobs, have relocated. All you have to do is go on Domtar's website. Domtar is very plain about this. They'll show you all of the paper mills that they're operating in the southern and central United States, and all they do basically here now is take the pulp, the wood fibre, semi-process it and ship it there. All of the jobs that we were creating in Ontario, that we need to create in Ontario, have now been relocated to the United States.

But it's not just Domtar. In my home town, Fort Frances, AbitibiBowater is running the pulp mill at flank speed. If they run it any faster, the thing may fall apart. They're running the pulp mill at flank speed. They take the wood fibre from the forest, they bring it in, they semi-process it. As soon as it comes off that pulping machine, away it goes to the southern and central US, where it's used to make to make paper. The best jobs, the higher-skilled jobs, the value-added jobs—this government, through its misguided electricity policy, has essentially relocated those jobs from northern Ontario to the southern US. The same thing's happening at the Abitibi-Bowater complex in Thunder Bay. That complex used to be a kraft pulp mill, a hardwood pulp mill and three high-speed paper machines. Today two of the paper machines are completely shut down. One operates sometimes. The hardwood pulp mill shut down, but the softwood kraft pulp mill is operating at full speed. And what are they doing with the wood fibre? Shipping it to the southern United States, where the value-added jobs have been relocating. The same thing is happening literally in Kapuskasing. This government has literally taken the value-added jobs, the high-skill jobs and shipped them off to the United States.

But do you know what the greatest travesty is? My part of Ontario generates electricity at some of the lowest costs on the planet. The Kenora paper mill completely shut down. The Kenora paper mill was surrounded by hydro dams that generate electricity at less than one cent a kilowatt hour—less than one cent a kilowatt hour.

We've had paper mills shut down where you don't even have to use the transmission lines because the hydro dam is right there beside the mill. You'd think, in a world where energy is becoming expensive and in short supply, that mills and processing plants that were located right by hydro dams that generate electricity at some of the lowest cost on the planet would be booming; and in a world of any sort of good sense, they would be. Except that this government has adopted a policy which says that it doesn't matter if your plant, if your processing facility, your mill, is right beside a power dam that generates electricity at some of the lowest cost on the planet. We're still going to force you to pay costs that have nothing to do with your business and nothing do with your location. That's why these jobs are relocating.

Similarly, what's now called Vale Inco but was then Inco was very plain when they shut down the copper refinery in Sudbury and shipped the 200 jobs to Quebec. These were good jobs; these are the high-end jobs. They were just very blunt. They said, "Look, here's the industrial hydro rate in Ontario after five years of the McGuinty government. Here's the industrial hydro rate in Quebec. We'll save several millions of dollars a year if we simply mine the minerals in Ontario and ship them to Quebec for smelting and refining."

That's exactly what Xstrata is going to do in Timmins, but when it all comes out in the wash in Timmins, it will be over 2,000 good jobs because of the contractors, the suppliers and all of the other people who are associated with that metallurgical site. Where is the McGuinty government's response to these things? There is none. The throne speech is totally bereft of any plan to take this on.

In talking about the Ring of Fire, let's be clear: The Victor diamond mine, which is located near Attawapiskat, was over 15 years in development. It opened just a couple of years ago. The Ring of Fire has incredible mineral potential, but if you're going to put power lines into the Ring of Fire—this company says they want to build a rail line into the Ring of Fire—if you're going to put the other infrastructure in place, and if this government is going to properly address the First Nations issues—and I think the evidence that this government was not properly addressing the First Nations issues was evident when you have two of the First Nations that are right adjacent to the Ring of Fire blockading any further development. I think that tells you that the First Nations were not happy with what was happening. If this government is going to properly address the First Nations issues, it will be at least 15 years before you see any meaningful activity that generates jobs and economic activity coming from the Ring of Fire.

What is this government's plan in the interim? There doesn't seem to be one. Yes, I know they have a northern growth plan. It's no plan at all. It reads like somebody's shopping list that they made up on Sunday afternoon just before the store closed: "I'd better get three litres of milk and one of orange juice and some bread, and maybe some peanut butter and marmalade." It's no plan at all; no plan

whatsoever. Meanwhile, people are hurting; people are hurting badly.

But what was equally disturbing about this throne speech is that those very folks, these very people who, in many cases, have seen their incomes reduced by more than half over the last few years, people who had good jobs, good incomes, and are now struggling, are going to be hit with the largest single tax increases that they have ever experienced as a result of the HST, and yet, no discussion from this government. It's as if this government thinks that the HST didn't happen. But it is going to happen. People who have no access to public transit are going to pay a lot more money for gas and diesel. The estimate is that this government will take an additional \$830 million out of people's pockets through the HST on gasoline and diesel. For people in northern Ontario communities and rural communities, this is going to hurt badly. At a time when people have less income, the McGuinty government is going to take more from them in taxes.

It doesn't end there. Just simple things—I was at a hockey tournament on the weekend and I was talking with some parents. They said, "Our kids and the team that they're on have about 40 games and 40 practices a year, so 80 ice times a season, and the ice costs about \$100 per session." I said, "Do you know that the HST will apply to that?" They said, "No. What do you mean?" I said, "Well, if it's \$100 a session and you've got 80 ice times, that's \$8,000 for ice. Now you're going to pay 13% HST on top of that."

Mr. Michael A. Brown: That's not right.

Mr. Jeff Leal: That's not right.

Mr. Howard Hampton: That is exactly right. I invite Liberal members, if you've got something to say, to stand up and say it. Quit hiding from the HST. Thirteen per cent on \$8,000 is going to be over \$9,000. That's what the ice time will cost that hockey team. There's no way—no way—you can avoid that. That's the reality.

1650

But you know, the people I really feel for are First Nations, because First Nations, until now, have had a point-of-sale exemption from the provincial sales tax. That will be wiped out with the HST. Now, I don't know if this government cares about this, but I know that in my constituency the lowest-income people are First Nations. The people who struggle on the lowest incomes are First Nations, and now they're about to be hit with a massive tax increase. I was visiting with some of the First Nation communities over the last couple of weeks, and in many of the communities people do not have a vehicle. They may go into Dryden or Sioux Lookout once every two weeks. They take a taxi. The taxi fare in is \$50; taxi fare back is \$50. I pointed out to them it's not going to be \$100 anymore. It will be \$113 because the HST will apply to taxi fare. These are people who, if they have to go to Thunder Bay, take the bus. The bus ticket back and forth to Thunder Bay is \$100. It will now be \$113 with the HST. If folks go in to Sioux Lookout to buy a winter jacket for their kid and the winter jacket costs \$100, it's now \$113.

The government says, "Well, you know, what? You can apply to get these taxes back," but this government should know what the rules are. The basic rule is this: You have to show that you live on the First Nation and you have to show that wherever the goods were purchased, they were shipped to the First Nation. But if you did your shopping in Sioux Lookout at the Northern store or you did your shopping in Red Lake or if you did your shopping in Nakina, Longlac, Marathon, Timmins or Hearst, you did your shopping in the store, you have no evidence that the goods were shipped to the First Nation.

We also know the reality: People in their busy lives will find it very difficult to take these HST costs and save the bills and receipts and then take these HST costs and save the bills and receipts and take these HST costs and save the bills and receipts and then sit down like an accountant and work it out and send it in and make the claim. That's the reality. Some of the lowest-income people in Ontario, First Nations, are going to be hit the hardest. Do you know what First Nations find really bewildering about this? This is a government that continually boasts about its new relationship with First Nations, and First Nations leaders say, "There was no consultation with us. There was no dialogue. There was no discussion. How does this show a new relationship?" How does it show respect for First Nations when this happens?

These are issues which I hoped would have been somehow addressed in the throne speech, but sad to say, nowhere were they addressed in this throne speech. This government talks about Open Ontario. I didn't see any openness here. I didn't see any strategy to reopen pulp mills or paper mills or sawmills. I didn't see any openness to a new—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I just want to recount to members of the Legislature how I maybe spent Monday in a northern constituency. I did a clinic in Gore Bay, a small municipality on Manitoulin Island, and talked to some folks who came to see me about some difficulties and opportunities they had, and spent the rest of the morning in Mindemoya talking to Community Living Manitoulin, then over to talk to Manitoulin Family Resources, which operates the women's shelter and a number of other social services. Later on in the afternoon I joined my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs in Sudbury for something called the Little NHL, the Little Native Hockey League, which was started from some folks from Aundeck-Omni-Kaning, which was formerly known as Sucker Creek and Whitefish River First Nation, almost 40 years ago—39 years ago. They attracted to the city of Sudbury 900 young hockey players, over 110 teams, to play hockey in one of the most joyous events I think I've ever been at. There's great entertainment to be found there. There were 300 people from Sarnia who came to Sudbury for this event. It was fabulous.

I want to say to the member across the floor that he, with his one-trick-pony approach to forestry, does not recognize there are 190,000 unemployed forest workers in the US—72 pulp and paper mills in the US. He doesn't seem to live in the same world we live in in North America, and understand the complexity of the industry. We are hurting in forestry, it is true, but your one-trick pony is just too much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I listened very carefully to the member from Kenora—Rainy River, and I particularly took a lot of interest in his comments on the forestry industry and the huge investments that have been made in some of the modern plants up there. To think that they have been downsized so dramatically over the last five years, basically under the watch of this government, is very disturbing.

I guess it goes back to our comments earlier on the throne speech. What we were looking for in the throne speech was a new vision, a new direction. We've got the world economy suffering and everybody using that as an excuse for the downturn in the economy. What I was looking for, particularly, and I'm not someone from northern Ontario, was a new vision for the forestry industry. Whether there are plants closed down around the world—I'm not sure about those numbers that the member from Algoma—Manitoulin just mentioned—it's a very important part of the economy in northern Ontario and I, for one, expected a lot more out of this government when it comes to revitalizing and showing enthusiasm and making sure that the people in northern Ontario who work in the forestry industry can continue to work in the environment they love to work in.

Obviously we haven't seen that in the throne speech, and maybe it is more complex than I'm used to seeing or am aware of. But I can tell you that there wasn't a vision, as far as I was concerned, and I applaud the member from Kenora—Rainy River for bringing these points forward. I do think he knows his riding very well—he knows northern Ontario very well—and I, like him, would agree that the throne speech was very shallow in trying to set a vision for northern Ontario and the mining and forestry industries as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd also like to commend the member from Kenora—Rainy River. He's very astute in what is going on in his area.

I must say that four years ago, I was lobbying for the US steelworkers, and some of the workers in the Kenora paper mill were with the United Steelworkers union. Even then, we lobbied in this Legislature and warned them about job losses and what AbitibiBowater was doing at the time, and it fell on deaf ears. Obviously, it still falls on deaf ears.

As far as I know, the two paper mills in Kenora are still shut. I know that the major employer in Kenora is the hospital, and I also know that guys sit on their

porches and watch logs going down the road to Manitoba to be processed outside the province because they can't afford the hydro. The guys then told me that they were paying two thirds more for hydro than Manitoba at that time, and AbitibiBowater was looking at Manitoba or Quebec to produce the lumber into product.

So here are the guys watching their forest basket trees leaving their area on trucks driving by them—their old jobs—and that place had been producing for 80 years to 90 years, if I'm not mistaken. They had been a major producer, one of the best wood baskets in all North America, and they're unemployed and shut down, and I believe 11 other communities in northern Ontario have been affected.

This government sat on their heels and did nothing for the forestry industry. When I was lobbying four years ago, we warned them. I was in Ottawa warning them; I was in this building warning them. They did nothing. This Liberal government did nothing then and is doing nothing now to bring jobs back to Ontario. If you'd start smartening up with your hydro rates and start giving tax breaks and tax rebates to the forestry industry, you might get them back. But you're not doing anything.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: The member from Kenora-Rainy River commented on how the throne speech looked from his part of the world, but there are some things I would like to comment on from my part of the world, from my part of the province.

1700

For example, in my part of the province, if you go into a store to buy a kid's jacket, kids' clothing is exempt from the provincial sales tax, and it will continue to be exempt from the HST—at least the provincial part of the HST. That's one of the exemptions that we are continuing. As far as I know, the budget of Ontario and the law of Ontario apply to northern Ontario, so I would think that if you went into a store in northern Ontario to buy a children's jacket, you would find that in fact it is exempt from the provincial part of the HST, just the way it always was.

I don't know about Mr. Hampton's part of Ontario, but when I think of hockey in my neck of the woods, hockey takes place in municipal skating rinks for the most part. If a municipality—number one, most kids' leagues are exempted anyway, but if you go into a municipal hockey rink, municipalities get rebates on the GST. That means municipalities get rebates on the HST. The municipality has no business charging that whole HST to their clients, residents and constituents, because they're getting a rebate on it. So if that's what some league is telling people, that league is stretching—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Kenora-Rainy River has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to thank the honourable members for their contributions. I'd especially like to respond to my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin. I

noticed, when he talked about the youth hockey tournament, that he didn't mention to people there that next year the ice time is going to cost them more money because of the HST. I find this true of all the Liberal members: They don't want to talk about the impact of the HST on people who are already living on lower incomes. This is going to be really, really difficult. Parents who already sacrifice so that their kids can play hockey or soccer are going to find next year that this is going to become much more expensive.

The member talks about the one-trick pony of hydro rates. I invite the member to go talk to Bowater when they shut down the two paper machines in Thunder Bay. They were very direct. They said, "We can't afford the electricity costs." When Domtar shut down the two paper machines in Dryden, they simply said, "Look, our hydro bill has accelerated by 40% in five years. We can't afford to operate." When Abitibi shut down the Mission mill in Thunder Bay, they asked me to come and look at their cost figures and they asked the two members from Thunder Bay to come and look at their cost figures, and they said, "The only cost figure that's gone up for us, which makes it unaffordable for us to continue to operate, is our hydro bill. We simply cannot continue."

The member says that, yes, they've lost some forest jobs in Thunder Bay to the United States. Yes, they have. But you know what? Their losses are small compared to what has happened in Ontario under the McGuinty Liberals.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm going to be sharing my time with my colleague from Willowdale, who happens to be my parliamentary assistant as Attorney General.

I want to speak, though, as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I want to say that the Open Ontario throne speech presents a brighter future for aboriginal peoples throughout the province of Ontario—First Nations, Métis, Inuit—a brighter future than the one that might have been enjoyed in the past by many. It also speaks to a plan, to an approach to that brighter future. It's one thing to negatively comment on what's happened in the past, but it's essential—it is absolutely essential—to have a plan to redress the past, to reconcile with the past and to achieve that brighter future.

There are several parts of the throne speech which speak directly to that, which I look forward to in the coming months as the throne speech is brought to life through government initiatives and legislation. One area, of course, is the area of education. Education is absolutely the key to the future, and the particular part of education which is essential is post-secondary education and enhanced skills training. Premier McGuinty, in the Reaching Higher plan, made that a centrepiece for Ontario's future economic development almost five years ago—and it's a good thing he did, because everybody today is speaking about the necessity of post-secondary education and skills training. Thank goodness we started

on it more than five years ago by making the largest investment in 40 years in that area.

Part of that investment was specifically directed to first-generation students, those whose parents had not gone on to post-secondary education or skills training, and to aboriginal students. There is a specific part of the Reaching Higher plan that is directed to those students. We need to continue and enhance those efforts in the future, because in parts of this province, such as the north, the fastest-growing part of the workforce that will be needed for economic prosperity in the future is our First Nations, Métis and Inuit: the aboriginal peoples. We need to make sure that every aboriginal person has access to and benefits from post-secondary education and skills training. That will ensure a solid foundation for economic prosperity in the future.

We've seen some specific examples of success there. The Victor diamond mine was mentioned. The Victor diamond mine is a specific example of success. It is not simply a development by a corporation of a diamond deposit; it is a development that had at its heart the training of and obtaining of skills by First Nations, particularly along the James Bay coast. They are an essential and integral part of every part of the operation and an essential part of the success of that mine. We have also seen that in other operations in the north, such as the Musselwhite mine, where First Nations from surrounding communities have benefited specifically and directly.

The goal is to build on what we've learned, to build on the success and to ensure that people in First Nations who have historically not had access to economic opportunity, who have not had it for themselves or for their children—certainly not their children's children—now have access to that success. How do you do that? You make post-secondary education and enhanced skills training available, you specifically target it where appropriate and you combine with it economic opportunity.

I've mentioned one: the Victor diamond mine. I mentioned another one: the Musselwhite mine. We're speaking about the Ring of Fire, a huge chromite deposit—but other minerals as well—located in the middle of almost a dozen First Nations communities. There's a huge opportunity there to ensure that all peoples—aboriginal peoples, non-aboriginal peoples, northern Ontarians, southern Ontarians, everybody—benefit along with the corporation and its owners through that development. It is only through everybody benefiting, I say, that developments like that can proceed and prosper.

The comment has been made that developments like that take years. Of course they do.

Interjection: That's why you've got to have a plan.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You have a plan, and you work to the plan. So when a development proceeds, the first on the ground are those who are not only exploring but prospecting and mapping the land. Well, who better to be part of that process than those who have been of the land for centuries?

Then you talk about access to power. In the province of Ontario we have the most far-reaching energy

legislation in North America, some of the best in the world, in the Green Energy Act. It specifically incents wind, solar, run-of-the-river projects, specifically incents projects by aboriginal peoples. So we're seeing applications throughout the province of Ontario by aboriginal peoples, First Nations. You can see those opportunities in the north. They're opportunities not simply to have wind and solar projects on First Nations lands; they're opportunities also for First Nations peoples, for Métis and others to be part of the running of the projects, the building of the projects, the servicing of the projects, and to be constructing the components for the projects. It is an enormously exciting opportunity. This is happening and beginning to happen all around Ontario, not five years from now, not 10 years from now—now.

1710

I was on Six Nations just about six weeks ago with my colleague Brad Duguid, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, when we witnessed the signing between Six Nations and Samsung of an accord that sprang directly from the Ontario government-Samsung relationship. It sprang directly from the Green Energy Act, it sprang directly from the foresight of the Premier and this government in ensuring that we become the home of green energy in the future. That foresight is giving rise already to economic opportunities for peoples who have not traditionally enjoyed the prosperity of Ontario. And education will be at the heart of realizing those opportunities. It is an enormously exciting prospect, not simply, as I say, in the north, but Six Nations, of course, in the south, and throughout the province of Ontario.

The other part of the throne speech which is potentially very exciting for First Nations, for aboriginal peoples throughout Ontario, is the part that concentrates on water. We are the home to more fresh water in the province than anywhere else in the world. Water is a huge natural resource. Protecting it, ensuring that it's clean, in the face of continuous development, is absolutely crucial. We are the leaders in Ontario, with some of the best water purification companies in the world, and I would only mention two: Trojan Technologies and Purifics, both of which happen to be resident in the great and glorious London, Ontario.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Good companies.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Great companies that do business all over the world. Clean water technology is where it will be at for many in this world in the years to come; clean water in all of Ontario is essential; clean water in the north is essential.

Every isolated First Nations community—every community—is going to have its water system. Who can run that water system? Who should be participating in running that water system? Who needs training? We know the federal government is withdrawing their support for that activity, but First Nations still need to have access to clean water and have the people able and available to service it, repair it, develop it. Those are great opportunities for the future. As I say, as Trojan and Purifics have done, let's build on the knowledge that we

have, and we're going to do that through the proposed Water Opportunities Act. What a great proposed piece of legislation—enormously exciting, as I say, for First Nations, Métis and Inuit throughout the province of Ontario, and great for the companies that are involved in this technology at the moment, two of which happen to be, as I say, resident in a place not far from here known as London, Ontario.

This throne speech speaks to a brighter future for all Ontarians and a brighter future for our First Nations, a brighter future for our Métis, a brighter future for our Inuit. We will be taking advantage of a continuously strengthened relationship between the government of Ontario and aboriginal peoples. I'm very much looking forward to the future of Ontario as outlined and as will be achieved under the Open Ontario plan.

I'll turn it to my colleague.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm happy to follow my colleague the Attorney General in my remarks on the speech from the throne.

As I said earlier in one of my two-minuters, Open Ontario is all about the future. Ontario, like every other major economy in the world, is at a crucial crossroads. The nature of political economies is changing. We are at a crossroads. We are at a fork in the road, and, like most times when you come to a fork in the road, there are a couple of things you can do. You can come to the fork in the road and be uncertain or nervous about which way to go and you can retreat, you can go back, or you can choose one of the forks in the road. In Ontario's economy, we cannot go back to the old economy. The old economy is behind us. So the question is: Where do we go? Which fork in the road do we take?

Open Ontario is a choice; it's a roadmap of the fork in the road that we are going to take. In the Open Ontario plan, we've laid out a plan that builds on, that takes advantage of, that recognizes the ambitions of 13 million Ontarians, that takes advantage of and builds on the confidence of 13 million Ontarians and takes advantage of and builds on the capabilities and the capacity of 13 million Ontarians.

People from all around the world come to Canada, and they particularly come to Ontario. Why do people come to Ontario? Why are Toronto and Ontario such a magnet for ambitious, educated immigrants? It's because we have a structure here, we have a political economy here, that they know they can bring their skills to and that they can build on. The Open Ontario plan is going to help all of those newcomers to Ontario. It's going to help all of the people who are already here. It's going to protect our seniors. It is going to take us down a fork in the road. It's going to take us down a fork in the road to recovery.

Now, I've sat here and I've listened to the remarks from the official opposition and from the third party. Of course, this being politics, what we've heard from the other side is negativism, negative critiques, harping, crankiness, but no solutions, no ideas about how to go forward, which fork in the road to take. What they want to do, having come to the fork in road, that fork being the

nature of Ontario's changing economy—they have no plan. They have no plan. Their plan, their reaction, is to retreat, to go back, but that is not what we can do in Ontario.

What do other people outside of this chamber think about the Open Ontario throne speech? What's the public reaction to it? That's critical; that's very, very important. In this chamber we hear all of the criticism, the harping and the haranguing from the opposition parties. I'd rather place real value in what I'm hearing from third parties, from the outside.

For instance, I'm quoting from the Globe and Mail editorial of March 9, 2010, referring to the throne speech: "... clear signs that the government is thinking creatively about economic growth. When dollars are scarce and international competition is fierce, sometimes the best innovation is an innovation in thinking." That's what Open Ontario is all about.

March 9, 2010, the Toronto Star editorial: "At a time of severe economic upheaval and widespread personal hardship, one thing that can be said safely about Monday's throne speech is this: the provincial government gets it...."

"This throne speech sketches out a prudent plan for an increasingly knowledge-based economy for the province."

The Ottawa Citizen, March 9, 2010: The McGuinty government is "pointing in the right direction."

The CEO of the Belleville chamber of commerce, quoted in the Belleville Intelligencer: "The Open Ontario plan acknowledges ... the work already under way including tax reform and efforts to reduce red tape, both of which the chamber"—that is, the chamber of commerce—"has been looking for for years."

1720

Chartered accountants is one of the professions in Ontario that has the most critical and valued insights into the nature of our economy, and how to build it and how to grow it and how to get it off in the right direction. In that regard, Mr. Rod Barr, the president and CEO of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, said, "We're pleased to see that the throne speech maps out this direction—especially in financial services where we are already significant players—and in green technologies, new resource opportunities and attracting the best foreign students. These will also be important in offsetting losses sustained in other areas during the recession." Again, it's a plan to go forward.

The executive director of Peterborough Green-Up, quoted in the Peterborough Examiner on March 9: "It's nice to see longer-term planning on the province's part." Again, the plan: Open Ontario. "We're happy to see the province interested in looking at, and investing in, green jobs." Again, it's about a plan to go forward. But it doesn't stop there.

Anne Sado, who's the chair of the committee of presidents of all of the Ontario community colleges and also the president of George Brown College here in Toronto, referring to throne speech, said, "This is an import-

ant commitment to people's futures and to producing a stronger workforce in this new knowledge economy," and "Greater numbers of people will get the higher education and training they need to achieve success."

The Ontario Chamber Commerce—now, there is an organization of, again, business persons, businessmen and businesswomen, keenly interested in how our economy unfolds. What do they say? "Today's speech from the throne, with its focus on creating the right environment in Ontario for investment, job creation and skills development, sets the right tone for Ontario as Ontario prepares for the end of the global recession." Again, they're supporting the plan; they're acknowledging the strengths and merits of Open Ontario, the plan to move forward. We are not stuck at the fork in the road. We are not going to retreat. We are going to take a fork in the road, and Open Ontario represents that fork in the road.

I do have a very interesting endorsement here which I must share, especially with the official opposition, in regard to the throne speech. Chris Hodgson, president of the Ontario Mining Association and a former member of the Progressive Conservative caucus, and a former Minister of Northern Development and Mines—what did he say in the *Toronto Sun* on March 10, 2010? He said, referring to the throne speech—and I want to be very careful with the quote: "It's good news for our members that the government has recognized the importance of mining," and, "Also they [Ontario government] realize it can be done in an environmentally sustainable fashion." That's from Chris Hodgson, a former Mike Harris-Ernie Eves cabinet minister.

Now you see that a former distinguished member of the official opposition's caucus is out there in the real world, away from the official opposition's caucus headquarters down the hall here. He has got to look at the challenges that Ontario faces in an objective, down-to-earth, will-it-work, is-it-good-for-the-economy, is-it-good-for-the-jobs mindset. And when he applies that objective mindset, now that he's outside this place, he recognizes the value of the themes set out in the throne speech. I want to particularly thank him for recognizing that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I listened with some interest to the comments by the Attorney General and Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, as well as the member for Willowdale, who split their time in the discussion of the throne speech that we've had this afternoon. I listened as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs indicated that he was going to focus his remarks on that particular responsibility. At the start of his remarks he specifically indicated that that was going to be the focus of his speech. I didn't hear him mention the word "Caledonia," and I suppose that the minister would hope that no one would want to bring up that subject because it's surely one of this government's greatest failures since their election in 2003.

Our MPP for Haldimand-Norfolk, Toby Barrett, has, over the past four years of the illegal occupation of

certain lands known as the Douglas Creek Estates, time and time again called attention to the problems associated with the occupation in his riding, the fear, the intimidation, the lawlessness at times, the economic loss that community has experienced as a result of what's happened and the despair and loss of hope in that community that anything is going to be done to help because of this government's policy, quite frankly, which at best has been ineffective and at worst is an example of political hubris.

I would suggest and implore the minister in his two-minute reply, the opportunity that he has forthcoming, to apologize to the people of Caledonia for the ineffective policy of this government and explain what, if anything, they are going to do as a government to respond to that problem in the coming weeks because certainly that is a huge issue for the province of Ontario, and I think that the Attorney General and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has an obligation to address it in his response.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I'm going to try to take one minute on each of two topics. One, I represent a constituency that is home to more First Nations and Métis organizations than probably just about any other in Canada. In my previous political career I received an eagle feather, which was one of the only honours I ever accepted from First Nations elders, because of that.

A lot of things that we're doing right now are not specifically aboriginal programs per se, but things like day-long learning and Second Career reflect the reality that in the city of Toronto, 25% of people who are homeless are First Nations and Métis people, and while we may want to point fingers—and this is not to blame governments past. It's been one of the great Canadian failings that we have not embraced, engaged in, ever. I don't think we've had a government ever that's done the kinds of things that are necessary to correct the course of that. You just to have look at the conditions in our communities to see that.

I think the suite of programs that were laid out in the throne speech don't single aboriginal people out, but they deal with the fact that the rapid urbanization of First Nations and Métis people is being addressed aggressively in housing programs. You just have to go to Regent Park and see a \$1-billion buildout of private and public money in affordable housing and how that reflects upon meeting the housing needs of First Nations people.

The second thing I want to talk a little bit about—I talked earlier about the exchange that I think the minister touched on. It's the challenge of this economy. My friend from Hamilton and I have been chatting. I just went through the Internet and looked at 2009. Twenty-five—and I stopped there—companies, Hooper Welding, AquaCut Foam, Bar Hydraulics, Burlington Automation, SP Data, Hotel Hamilton, Factor (e), Tim Horton Manufacturing, VitaSound, INO, panamnursery, CANMET—I could go on and on. These are all companies that have expanded or opened their doors. In Hamilton, there have

been about 40,000 new jobs created, and 25,000 lost in the industrial sector, and 69% of companies are planning expansions in next three years—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member for his stats, and I'm not sure—I live there and a lot of my friends are out of work, former tradespeople who can't find work. Yes, maybe some of those companies have opened up their doors, but I'm sure, as he pointed out to me in our discussion, that most of those are 25 people or less. There may be the odd or more—there may be some with more. But, with all due respect, when you get major manufacturers closing in the Hamilton area, like Westinghouse, Camco—they employed hundreds and hundreds of people. They're all good-paying jobs.

Yes, there may have been some jobs created in Hamilton. I wouldn't want to argue, but I would tend to believe that a lot of them are in the service industry, too, of those 40,000. So they may have created maybe 5,000 jobs that are \$50,000 or \$60,000 or more, but I would say the majority of those jobs are not well-paying jobs. We have more Tim Hortons in Hamilton per capita than anywhere else in Ontario, I believe. So there are a lot of jobs in those types of minimum wage situations. That doesn't buy houses, that doesn't buy cars, that doesn't buy major appliances, and it certainly doesn't allow you to have a decent pension or leave money to buy RSPs. Yes, his stats are probably correct, but they fall far short of the amount of people who have lost their jobs in that area in the last 20 years.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: The Attorney General talked about something that I think is very important for us as Ontarians. He talked about clean water. All over the world, one of the problems that nations everywhere will face is going to be access to water. To just give you an example from a developed nation, the mighty Colorado River that flows through the western United States is completely, totally consumed by the time it reaches the gulf of Baja. There is simply nothing left of it by the time it's used to irrigate soil and support agriculture in California. That's similar just about everywhere.

One technology that's going to be absolutely critical in the first half of the 21st century is going to be water technology, and nowhere in the world is it done better than here in Ontario. One of the directions laid out in the Open Ontario policy is that this is already the home of the leaders of that type of technology—how to purify water, how to ensure that water stays clean—and that's going to be one of the priorities for Ontario's government. We are going to lead the world in doing something that the world has to have done.

All over the world, in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, in South America, people have to learn how to ensure that they don't lose the clean water that they have, that their water doesn't erode the soil that they have and that they

know how to clean up water that may be polluted or contaminated. They look to Canada as one place where we've already got the technology, the know-how, the organization and the means of delivering it. This is going to be one of the central focuses of Open Ontario: to take a market that the rest of the world is going to desperately need in the next 40 years and capitalize on the lead that we already have. That's a good reason to get behind this speech from the throne.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Attorney General and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Just briefly, to the members for Wellington-Halton Hills, Toronto Centre, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and Mississauga-Streetsville, I want to thank them for their comments and contributions.

I want to pick up on something that my colleague from Toronto Centre mentioned, which is the urban aboriginal population. It's enormously important by many counts. There are more aboriginal peoples living in cities than there are on the First Nations. Many of the challenges that my friend spoke of quite eloquently are being addressed now through these very far-reaching programs such as all-day learning right through the continuum of enhanced post-secondary education and skills training program, and I mentioned the First Generation programs before. But there is a lot more to do.

By saying there's a lot more to do, we recognize the enormous potential that all people have to make a positive contribution not only to their own futures but to the future of the province of Ontario. We need to ensure that every Ontarian is able to make that contribution to the fullest extent of their abilities in order to achieve our potential as a province. That's why the Reaching Higher plan, our educational approaches, our poverty reduction strategy, among other initiatives, all come together to make sure that those who are in need are supported, those who can achieve are able to achieve, and everybody is able to reach their full potential.

I'm very excited, as I said, by the Open Ontario plan for the future because it is a future that's brighter for all, a future that's brighter for aboriginal people in the province—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate? The member from Cambridge.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Oh, sorry; Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes, I am the member from Oshawa. I was wondering if somebody else jumped up ahead of me.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak on the throne speech. I'm going to stick to the contents of the speech and try to do what we can.

On page 1, it says, "First: It plans to invest over \$32 billion in roads, bridges, public transit and energy retrofits for our schools." The first thing that comes back is, where do the funds come from? Thirty-two billion

dollars is a substantial amount of funds. I know, from the time that I had the opportunity to spend in the Ministry of Transportation, certainly a lot of sectors are very concerned with where the funding will come from long-term for the reconstruction of roads in order to keep those builders going in the province of Ontario. The populace at large is very concerned with where the additional funds are going to come from to deal with these issues.

Then it says, "Second: Your government is supporting Ontarians in their choice to go back to school so they can get a good job—not just any job." The concern there is that the number of job losses, particularly coming from Oshawa, not Cambridge, in our communities is rather substantial. They were good-paying jobs that individuals did very well with; they had good pensions. There's a lot of concern there now. These individuals are wondering, "Do we need to go back to school? Because there isn't a job out there. Are those some of the reasons that we as individuals need to go back to be retrained? And once we are retrained, where do we get jobs?"

The throne speech mentions a culinary course, and I certainly wonder, as do a lot of individuals, how you can go from the auto parts sector to a culinary course and find that compatible or comparable. Maybe that particular individual, in this case, it worked out for, but a lot of the individuals who have 20-odd years working on the line at General Motors in Oshawa and other car plants are not saying that's something that they find a very easy task.

How do we move forward in other sectors? Ontario used to have a competitive advantage when first dealing with workers' compensation; then we had a competitive advantage throughout North America that dealt with the health care system. Now those competitive advantages have been negotiated away in other jurisdictions and Ontario no longer leads in those areas. We have to find ways to lead once again, and I'm not so sure that this throne speech will be that path to a strong Ontario that once again needs to be out there. Certainly the individuals are wondering, when they're going back to school, where the jobs are going to be at the end of that school rainbow.

The throne speech said, "We will continue to build the world's cars—but they will be the more efficient cars the world needs." The throne speech is designed—what takes place is that various cabinet sectors will input into the speech. What I'm reading here is that the government is going to decide what vehicles will be made available by the manufacturers, as opposed to the consumer. See, it's the consumer who dictates what will take place and how it will take place and what they want to purchase. That's what dictates how they're going to move forward. The Camaro in Oshawa is doing extremely well. The quality of work there is second to none in the world and the individuals are producing a great-quality car. The demand is out there; they're adding additional lines and more production to make sure. But when you read that "they will be the more efficient cars the world needs," to me that says, "Wait a second. Is one of the ministries stepping in and saying, 'Now, we're going to set your

standard for you and we will decide how that will take place'?" You only need to talk to those individuals within those various sectors and find out there is some concern when they see those sorts of aspects coming forward in a throne speech.

The training upgrades that are mentioned in the very next paragraph, that talks about education—we've heard it on a regular basis: the education Premier. There's constantly a focus on an educational component. Nobody has concerns with moving forward with a stronger education and a knowledge base that is beneficial in the long run. However, when these training upgrades take place, how is it going to unfold? Currently, part of the problem is, for example, in the apprenticeship program, when an individual takes your courses, they're normally located at distances away. So they're out of work, they're not being paid and time lags take place when they're dealing with those training upgrades that are so necessary.

"A plan for our economy," page 4: "The Open Ontario plan begins with creating a climate where business can thrive, create jobs and build innovative new products to sell to the world." You have to create an environment and you have to lead by example. We can't constantly listen to the fact that, "Don't you realize there's a world recession on?" The last recession that was around—quite frankly, a friend of mine, Paul Mackie, was with the governor of Michigan, and he stated to us, "Listen, I have to tell you. I met the governor of Michigan." He's a race car driver and he was at a race with the governor. The governor said, "I have to tell you, Ontario used to be our number one supplier for jobs." But the policies that came forward to attract businesses into the province through the previous government in 1995 were their biggest concern, because they felt they were going to lose a lot of jobs that were going to Michigan and other states simply because of the taxation and the policies that were established. You need to work and lead by example. Set policies that attract businesses.

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In business, there's essentially a push and a pull strategy: You either try to push the product out of a manufacturing location by providing incentives to produce or you pull it out. What I'm seeing here is a push strategy: You push it out the door by making decisions or by making things—that there will be more efficient cars the world needs. What that says to me is that they're going to decide which vehicles are going to be pushed out that door, as opposed to a pull strategy where you create an environment to attract individuals to pull the product out through the acquisition of goods. It's a simple, basic business premise that has been very effective, and there are two different sides on how it's taking place.

What I see here is the current government deciding, "We will support this industry and push it out by supporting them," as opposed to allowing the populace at large to make the decision. Quite frankly, the people of the province of Ontario are the best ones to decide what should move forward and how it should take place.

Also, it says income tax for Ontario was cut on January 1. Well, I look at that and I say, is that not just robbing Peter to pay Paul? You brought in the health care tax in the past, as well as the HST. When we talk about the HST—I know it was mentioned earlier on by one of the members regarding ice fees and how municipalities get a rebate. Well, they used to receive a 100% rebate. The rebate after the HST moves forward is not going to be 100%, and the municipality will have to make decisions as to where it's going to give breaks and not give breaks. I know that in my own family we're looking at possibly \$50 a month in increased costs just to play hockey in the city of Oshawa. That's what it'll amount to. If you speak to your own cabinet ministers, you'll find that some of them will actually pay a considerable amount more than that once the HST takes place.

One of the questions that I would like answered, if at all possible—and I'm not sure there will be an individual. We talked about the harmonized sales tax on page 5. The question is about the zero-rated—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: You paid \$600 a month for ice time?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: It's \$500 a month.

Interjection.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Well, no. We pay \$500 a month for ice fees for the boys. They play rep hockey, and that's what it amounts to. Probably, when you factor it in, they'll go up about \$25 a month. The fee for hockey is \$250 a month per child. When you look around, some communities are even more expensive. I know members of your own caucus actually have expressed the fact that they pay a considerable amount more than that, and they write the cheque at one particular time, during the tryouts, in order to do that.

The zero-rated taxation rates for things like basic groceries: For those who haven't seen it, the CGAs have a great booklet on the HST and its implementation within our community. It lists what's taxed and non-taxable. It's the zero-rated question, where basic groceries are zero-rated. I'm just wondering: Is that fixed, or does that mean that at a later date the zero rating can be changed? I haven't gotten a straight answer from anybody on that, and if there's somebody in the House who can clarify for me, that would be greatly appreciated.

Also on page 5, it talked about the Green Energy Act. If you go down a little bit farther: "Your government will soon welcome hundreds of new, clean energy investments in Ontario through its feed-in tariff program...." That's great and it's nice to see, because you need an initiation of new technologies to come forward. They have to start somewhere, with wind power and solar power, but there are a number of other energy potentials out in the province that need to be looked at.

One of the questions, of course, is the time-of-day metering with the smart meters that is going to take place and the cost, particularly to seniors. As mentioned, the throne speech doesn't address seniors, the impact on them or their quality of life. What's going to take place, for example, on time-of-day metering? For those sug-

gesting that people stay up past 11 o'clock to do their laundry and dishes etc., if they haven't got a timer on some of their appliances it makes it very difficult for those individuals who aren't at work during the peak hours for electricity. They're at home. They're in their residence and that's when they use electricity, at those times. How is this going to impact seniors? There's a large concern there and I completely agree with that.

If you turn to page 6 it says, "From water conservation to nanotechnology, Ontario companies are leading the way...." The one minister spoke about the two companies in the individual's riding and how they're moving forward. However, there's a company in Richmond Hill called BluePlanet. They recently had to list on the German stock exchange. There just wasn't any support here to make it happen for them. What it effectively is, if you take this—if I may use the glass of water to take a drink—if you put it through this process, the nanotechnology by BluePlanet, it uses nano bubbles. If you put this water through there, it would completely fill the glass up again. What it does is it provides an oxidizing base for plants. It has been very effective in increasing the lifetime in fish ponds and such because it puts oxygen back into the environment. It's an Ontario company, but it's been trying and trying to get some support, and having a considerable amount of difficulty.

So there are some companies out there that are leading the way in technologies, but they need to be reached out to. To be quite frank, I was quite concerned when I heard about the minister mentioning the two companies in his riding, whereas this company had to go to Germany in order to gain the support necessary to advance its product here in the province of Ontario.

The other aspect was how on page 7 the minister spoke about the Victor mine. In 2008, northern Ontario became home to the first diamond mine. The problem with that was, I was here when De Beers had their meet-the-miner day here at Queen's Park. Each year, when they come, a different company highlights its product. It just happened to be that De Beers was highlighting its product right here in the legislative dining room downstairs. It was amazing to hear the president of De Beers specifically state that when the taxation rate changed, he couldn't believe it took place, and he equated it to something that would take place in a Third World country. He received calls from the international president saying, "What is going on in the province of Ontario?"

Many probably don't know, but when I was the PA for northern development and mines, I announced the diamond mine potential locations for the province of Ontario. It's quite a spectacular event, if you didn't know what takes place. Virtually every helicopter from Quebec to Saskatchewan had been booked because the prospectors were waiting for these sites to be listed, and then the helicopters were all waiting at the airport. They get on the helicopters to do their claim staking and stake out these areas for potential development. My understanding is that there are two other sites in the province of Ontario

that have diamond mine potential. However, these companies are not going to invest in the province at this particular time.

There were some substantial changes back in the early 1990s in British Columbia. These companies look worldwide. They looked at these places to invest, and while they were in British Columbia, they said that the provincial government was not supportive of what was taking place in the mining sector, and they invested in the province of Ontario at that time. When you get changes in the taxation rate such as took place with the Victor diamond mine after they had invested \$900 million in that mine—and, according to them, they had about \$100 million that was directed to support the First Nations communities in that area, and they were reluctant to move forward. Yes, we know about the potential for the chromium mine, I believe it is, for the chromium that's used in stainless steel, but there are a lot of other potentials in here where people are questioning, "Do we want to get involved in that aspect?" I'm not sure that the certainty is there.

Most members here probably wouldn't know that I've held a prospecting licence since the 1980s. I enjoy my time in the bush, and you may as well carry a prospecting licence, because you never know what you're going to find when you're out there.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You struck gold in Oshawa, Jerry.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Oh, yeah.

The other aspect was from the same thing on page 7. I think some of the members in the House would recall, "Your government is fully committed to working with northerners, aboriginal communities and mining partners to fully realize the Ring of Fire's potential." During the public hearings on this, we were in Sioux Lookout, a great community in northwestern Ontario. The First Nation communities there said something that I had never heard before, and I was quite surprised. They said, on the legislation that was coming forward at that time, the Far North Act, that they were willing to go to war over it. That doesn't show a lot of support by that community. When they are specifically stating, for the first time in my privilege and honour to serve in this Legislature, that they are willing to go to war over an issue, that does not say it's building an environment that will allow those communities to move forward and to develop in the province of Ontario.

On page 8, it talked about the implementation of accessibility by 2025, but some of the things that are happening in my community, which I'm hearing from on a regular basis, are that because of the changes there, they are asking for support. How do they move forward when municipalities don't have the funds to make the changes as well? Madam Speaker, I have spoken to individuals in your own caucus who have expressed the same thing. Locally, as a result of this, they feel that they are going to have to close down two rink pads for sure, possibly three, along with swimming pools. I'm also hearing from the local parks association. The small parks association is saying that they're going to have to close

their clubhouses because they don't have the support to move forward with the accessibility legislation that has come in. They have no problem with trying to do it, but it's just a small group that used to raise funds at bingos and those other halls that are so difficult now.

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A lot of those organizations were very dependent on those bingo halls, but if you look at the numbers and the amount of halls that were out there supporting them, they've substantially dropped. I know a lot of those organizations were very dependent on those funds and are now hurting and looking for support elsewhere.

The other thing—when you get to page 9, it talked about how it has reduced class sizes. Of course, you've reduced class sizes, and we said what was going to happen—exactly what has taken place in my own kids' schools. They're in split classes now. There may be only 20 in a class, but there are 40 kids with one teacher in the same classroom, where they didn't have split classrooms before.

For every action there's an equal and opposite reaction, and you have to look at all the pros and cons and how things are going to unfold. They're talking about how the number of students who are graduating has increased; however, from what I understand, if you lower the bar or the ability or the grade level—my next-door neighbour is a retired principal from the local high school and she says that when she was there, you only had a certain number of Ontario scholars. Now, lo and behold, because the bar has changed—and instead of having the standard up here, it's now down here—there are 10 times as many individuals who are graduating as Ontario scholars.

Is it the reason, the encouragement to move forward in college and university because of the quality of education when they're graduating? Yes, there may be more individuals or the numbers may show that, but if the level of ability of those graduating from the schools is lower, then they need to stay in school longer in order to achieve those levels. I don't know; these are some of the things that people ask.

Also, you talk about on page 9, starting with a full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds that will begin across the province—there are a number of organizations that have approached me in that particular area. One of them was the Y; their program was under scrutiny now and they felt that the individuals in there were about to lose their jobs. As well, a number of—quite frankly, it was the churches. The churches that run the young day-cares in the schools are now going to be substantially impacted, and they felt that their preschool programs that were run by all the churches in the community—that had, according to them, lower student-to-teacher or student-to-individual ratios—are now going to be eliminated, and they have some strong concerns.

We all have our own different perspectives. They believe that giving the individuals or the young kids the opportunity to deal with some faith aspect before they go into a public school is now going to be eliminated

because of the fact that the individuals will automatically gravitate to the all-day education.

One of the other areas, and I brought it up before, is on page 10, where it talked about the skilled trades individuals. We need to ensure there that the individuals doing the training also work with the individuals doing the testing. My understanding from automotive mechanics—I'll be quite frank; Paul Beatty has brought it up and would love to discuss it—is that the individual who is doing the training of the courses is not coordinating with the individuals doing the testing, so many times they're not trained in the area they're being tested on.

The difficulty with that is that individuals are taking the test seven or eight times in order to achieve something, when they may never have the ability to work on a transmission, for example, in the case of an automotive mechanic, or have the ability to resource the questions as they come in, because when they're working in the field they will check on the Net or they'll check the manuals etc, to make sure that they're doing it in a proper fashion.

These are some of the concerns. There are many more. I know that the people of the province of Ontario are concerned. We're in difficult times; we all need to work together to make sure that we move forward. As opposition, our position needs to come forward to say that these are the areas we have concerns with. Let's hear some answers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to thank the member for his remarks. He presented a very reasonable critique of the throne speech, and I think it's very important that what he didn't talk about should also be mentioned, to place his remarks in their correct context. There's something that the throne speech has focused on, which is Ontario's opportunity in places like China and India.

Let's look at China and India by comparison with Ontario. China outnumbers us 100:1; India outnumbers us 85:1. This year China is projecting 10% growth; this year India is projecting 7.6% growth. Most economists expect that these two nations are going to lead the world recovery out of this particular recession.

What Ontario has proposed in this throne speech is that Ontario take a leading role in the education of foreign students. China is the biggest source of foreign students to Canada—already 42,000 out of Canada's annual 178,000. We should be far more aggressive in this. By educating a foreign student in Canada, in Ontario, what we've got is somebody who knows how business works here, who knows how our society works here, who is presumably going to go back to his or her country of origin, and what more natural thing than to go back, develop your contacts in your industries in India and China and then say, "The place that we should be doing business more than any other is Ontario. I know Ontario. I've been educated in Ontario." When one has toured Asia—and I haven't done a lot, but I've done a little bit—you encounter so many expats from just about every nation on earth, but especially Canada, and a lot of

people who work over there, who were educated here, find it very easy to come back and do the thing that we need them to do much more of, which is to do business right here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Exporting our spaces for education to international students was not something our Ontario students were eager to hear, some of whom are competing right now for spots in university. They would have hoped to have heard that this government was considering how to get more Ontario students into university. This strategy to turn education into an export industry is really, I think, born out of desperation. It seems to be an idea that revenue is better policy, regardless of where you get it and how you get it, than to train our own students here in Ontario. I don't know. Where's the plan? Has an analysis been done on this? We hear nothing except an idea—an idea born from where? Again, desperation.

My colleagues over there are laughing because they know not of a plan, either. You know not of a plan; you only know of an idea. Once that idea is planted, everybody follows along and hopes that something—something—will emerge from it.

This province had a five-year plan when I first came to the Legislature three years ago. There was huge talk about a five-year plan. Whenever the opposition parties asked about the detail of the five-year plan, there never was a detail of a five-year plan. Now we have more plans. The other plan is long forgotten because it failed. Nothing ever happened as a result of the first plan, and now we're branching out. We're going to import international students. We're going to have policies that mean nothing to us here in Ontario but make us look good on the world stage. I think it's quite pathetic.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to compliment the member from Oshawa for his insight on some important issues that he brought forward, and I hope he gets some answers at committee.

One of the biggest things that the McGuinty government brought forward in this session was the fact that they were going to lower class sizes. Well, with all-day kindergarten, our numbers tell us that the classes are going to go from 20 to 26 students. Speaking from a personal perspective, my wife is a retired kindergarten teacher, and she tells me that they have trouble getting EAs for the special-needs kids and stuff in the classes as is. The city of Toronto, the board in Toronto, is laying off EAs and other communities are laying off EAs, so their dream of a smaller class is not happening and probably won't happen, and it will be less productive for the kids with no EAs to help the teacher out.

The member from Oshawa also touched on the skilled trades. It's great to be training people and great to get them back to school and into the Second Career program that they like to tout around here. That's fine, but if you

don't have a job to go to, it's not much use. When you have trained to be a welder or trained to be something else and you end up working at Tim Hortons, it doesn't quite cut it.

What's their plan for manufacturing? In Hamilton, it's non-existent. They're talking about 600,000 jobs. I don't know where, but I certainly don't see them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to be here as the day wraps up. I was in committee most of the afternoon and managed to get in here for the last five minutes of the speech of the member from Oshawa. I'm not sure how long he spoke today, but I heard just the last little bit. I must say I hope that his comments today were a little bit more reflective and accurate, in terms of what he was portraying, than an article I had the opportunity to recently read in a sporting magazine in Thunder Bay that the member opposite from Oshawa submitted. It contained more inaccuracies, I must say, than I thought it was possible to include in one article, but we'll have an opportunity to speak about that.

When I was in committee, I managed to step out a little while ago and also hear the member from Kenora—Rainy River going on his same rant. Thank goodness our member from Manitoulin had an opportunity to respond to him, as well.

I know today is about the throne speech, and I know that the members in the opposition are having a difficult time finding anything positive to say about it. That's okay. I know that people who follow the goings-on in the Legislature on the parliamentary channel understand and expect that the members of the opposition will do exactly that: They will oppose. But I have to tell you, there is a point at which the credibility of the opposition begins to be called into question. Speaking on the HST, which many of them do spend much of their time speaking on, when you look at it federally and you look at it provincially, almost everybody now, politically, is supporting this. The federal Conservatives support it. The provincial Conservatives, I would suggest, are having a hard time holding on to their credibility in terms of their opposition on the HST. What we're left with is, federally and provincially, the NDP are the people opposing it.

The throne speech laid out quite clearly where we have been when we came out of the recession—

investments in career training and infrastructure—and on a go-forward basis, where we see ourselves going. We on this side of the Legislature are excited about it. We're going to continue to support the priorities we have in the past: health care, education and job creation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Oshawa has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the comments from the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan—I'm not sure which article he's referring to, but I'm sure I'll hear about it—and the members from Hamilton East, Burlington, Mississauga—Streetsville etc.

I want to comment on the Mississauga—Streetsville member's comments when he spoke about bringing in 20,000 students from places like China and India. Let me put it this way. When Maureen Kempston Darkes was the president of General Motors, she was complaining that there was all this competition out there for the parts industries and that General Motors could no longer compete. I looked at her and said, "Well, aren't you to blame for that?" She said, "What do you mean by that?" I said, "Look, you've outsourced"—and I started to list all the companies that are doing the production for these goods. I said, "You've outsourced all that. These individuals have companies to deal with as well. They go to the cheapest place." At that time they were going to China and to Mexico, and they were taking the technology with them to produce these goods in those jurisdictions. I said, "Guess what? When you don't come back with a tender or a bill or they can no longer sell to you, they still have to be in business. So now they're competing with you after you've outsourced the technology that you gave them."

What's going to happen when we bring these individuals in to train them how to make BlackBerry's and everything else that's made in Ontario? Guess what? We'll be exporting that expertise that'll be produced in other countries at lower rates, and they'll be sold in Canada and in Ontario. That's going to be a problem.

We need to plan. We need to look at the future, and we need to work together on this.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being after 6 o'clock, I now declare that this House stand adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

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Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

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Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
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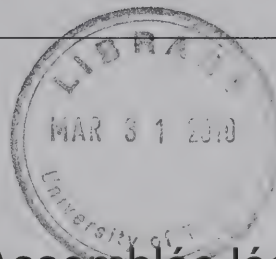
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Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 23 March 2010

Mardi 23 mars 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 23 March 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 23 mars 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Baha'i prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 22, 2010, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I didn't have time to order water. Can I wave one down? I have a bit of a cold, and we had a big rally in Sudbury yesterday. That didn't help my voice at all.

It is my pleasure to share a few comments on the speech from the throne, the Open Ontario plan. The speech from the throne, within a few minutes of starting, said:

"We carved our province out of a harsh northern land.

"Our people endured, and they thrived.

"They began to mine the land, and harvest the forests."

This is the only reference to forestry. It is written and has been read in a way that puts it squarely in the past tense, as in forestry being a thing of the past. For the people that I represent, the people of Nickel Belt, forestry is pretty much part of the present, and we all hope that it's going to be part of the future. But the throne speech does not reflect that at all.

If you go to communities throughout Nickel Belt, whether you talk about Foleyet, Mattagami, Gogama, Westree, Shining Tree and, if you go further down toward Alban and Bigwood, those people rely very much on forestry for most of their employment. If you walked through those communities right now, you would see that many of them have big rigs in their backyards. They have all sorts of forestry equipment, whether we talk about trailers or trucks, big limbers, chainsaws etc. All of the big equipment is in the back of their yards. It is collecting dust and collecting rust. It is covered with big tarps because the forestry industry has collapsed in my riding and in most of the northeast. We would have liked to have seen using forestry in a more accurate state; that is,

showing it as an industry that is part of our present and showing it as an industry that has a future in Ontario. For people of northeastern Ontario, forestry does have a future, and those people hoped that with a little help from their government, they could move forward.

An example is Fryer Forest Products, which is a company that borders David Ramsay's and my riding. Fryer has not been able to get a licence to harvest for multiple reasons. They look at the investment that the government has made in the south in the auto industry and manufacturing to keep jobs down there.

There's nothing wrong with helping people down south get jobs, but the people of the north would like to get their fair share. Getting their fair share means that there is also government help when it comes to rebuilding the forestry industry, not only the harvesting of the trees but also all of the other jobs that could be created with a secondary industry related to wood and related to wood fibres. There is a number of projects in northeastern Ontario.

Particularly in my riding, I can think of one that is to use some of the wood fibre residue at a sawmill to produce electricity. Here again, people of the north have a hard time accessing the grid. They thought they had a viable project. They thought that forestry was going to prosper, but when it came time to review their project, their project was good, but they could not access the grid.

The people of northeastern Ontario want their fair share from their government. Certainly, the opening statement of the throne speech did not bring them much hope in that direction.

Quand notre lieutenant-gouverneur a commencé le discours du trône, il a parlé de la foresterie comme une industrie du passé, une industrie qui a servi à développer notre province, mais pas une industrie qui a un présent, et encore moins un futur, dans notre province. Pour les gens que je représente dans Nickel Belt, c'était une grosse déception. Plusieurs de mes constituantes et constituants dépendent de l'industrie de la foresterie pour leur gagne-pain. Qu'on parle de places comme Foleyet, Metagama, Gogama, ou même dans le sud de mon comté, si on regarde à Bigwood ou à Alban, beaucoup de ces gens-là travaillent dans la foresterie—ou, je devrais dire, travaillaient dans la foresterie.

Quand on se promène dans les cantons, comme je fais, on se rend compte qu'il y a beaucoup d'équipements qui sont dans la cour en arrière de ces gens-là. Ils sont couverts par de gros "tarpaulins" en plastique, et tout ce qu'ils peuvent faire est de faire des paiements sur un équipement dispendieux qu'ils ne sont pas capables

d'utiliser parce que l'industrie de la foresterie vit des moments difficiles.

Ces gens-là regardent aux investissements qui ont été faits par leur gouvernement dans le sud de l'Ontario. Qu'on regarde à tout le secteur de l'automobile ou le secteur manufacturier, ils ont certainement eu de l'aide de leur gouvernement. Les gens du Nord auraient voulu voir dans le discours du trône un peu l'équivalent de ça pour les industries du Nord. Que l'on parle de la foresterie dans un contexte du passé, c'est un peu décourageant pour nous parce que dans le Nord-Est, on voit la foresterie comme une industrie présente et une industrie du futur.

La deuxième chose dont je voulais parler est encore là dans le discours du trône—the Open Ontario plan. We talk about exporting water technology. This is really, really hard to listen to.

I had just come back from a multi-First Nations visit in the north of our province. The first community I went to was Summer Beaver. I met with the staff at the nursing station and saw some of the clients. I saw two very cute little girls; I will call them Missy and her sister. Missy is about six years old, and she and her sister were both covered in a rash like I had never seen before. The nurse had tried Telemedicine, but they couldn't help them.

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That morning, when I got there, they were being air-lifted out of their community to go to a hospital. They all knew that it had to do with the water, but nobody knew how to treat those two little girls. They were joyful and helpful, but very scared; they didn't want to leave their community. They're young; they were born there; this is where they belong. Going away was very scary for them, for something as basic as having clean drinking water.

When you go to those communities, lots of them get dental visits only once a year. When there is no drinking water in their community, they don't drink water, and milk is too expensive, but for some reason unknown to me, you can buy two litres of pop for the same price in Beaver and Webequie, or any of the communities, as in Nickel Belt. That means that little kids end up with dental decay. So you see a whole bunch of very cute little kids—all of their front teeth have been pulled out and their back teeth are capped because they don't have proper access to dentists. When the dentists come, they are proactive to make sure the kids don't run into problems with tooth decay, so they pull all of their front teeth out and they cap the rest of them.

This is because those communities, those kids, don't have access to drinking water. They have to buy bottled water, and when you have to buy bottled water, you don't drink much of it. You end up drinking other stuff, most of the other stuff being full of sugar.

So here you grow up with no front teeth—they still have back teeth because they've been capped, so that they can chew, but they can't bite. That means that before their adult teeth grow in, those kids will never bite into an apple, pear or peach. They cannot bite. They will never bite into a carrot. They have no front teeth, which

means that the opportunity to develop good eating habits that include fresh fruits and vegetables is very hard. In fly-in communities, produce is very expensive. Not only are they expensive, those kids—because they don't have access to fresh drinking water—also have teeth problems.

Here it is just multiplying itself into making it hard for First Nations people, especially those in fly-in communities, to develop good eating habits, to stay healthy and to have healthy teeth—all this because they don't have access to fresh drinking water, yet we see a throne speech in which—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. I'd just ask that the conversations that are being held around the room respect the fact that we have a speaker. Please continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, madame—a speaker who has a very hoarse voice. Let me have a little drink of water; it could help.

Here we have a throne speech that talks about all of the technologies that Ontario wants to export to the world about clean drinking water, yet last time I checked, there are 78 communities in northern Ontario that are under boil-water advisories. That was last week—78 communities. A lot of them have been under boil-water advisories for years. We're talking a decade—10 years—six, seven, five years. That means there are entire generations of kids who have never had clean drinking water, and I'm thinking: How can we export this technology that we are so good at to the world when kids in my own riding, in my own province, have never had drinking water out of the tap? They end up with all of those health problems and issues, whether it's a skin rash, lots of dental problems or poor eating habits, because they don't have drinking water, yet we're going to export this to the world? How about we look after our own first? How about we look after those kids and use that technology to give them good drinking water? I would have liked the throne speech to have talked about that, but it is not there.

One thing that the throne speech did talk about was that we are going to review the Public Hospitals Act. This is something that we have been wanting to do for a long time. I'm not sure if the part of the Public Hospitals Act that will be under review will include all of the changes we would like to see.

We just went through Bill 179, the bill that expands the scope of practice of a number—I think there were 12 altogether—of health professions. Many of them came forward and wanted change to the Public Hospitals Act. One of those particular changes they want to see is the medical advisory committee of hospitals broadened to include not only physicians but the full complement of people who provide care within the hospital setting. So far, it doesn't look like that part of the bill will be up for review, but it should be.

What they are talking about, though, is a new payment formula for hospitals. This new payment formula has been tried in other jurisdictions, especially in England, where they realized that it did not work. We can call HBAM whichever way we want to slice it, but at the end

of the day, you look at gender and age and a little bit of geographical distribution, and it never works. You either have a formula that is so complicated to apply that you waste tons of resources trying to apply this fairly, or you just look at the basics that are easy to collect, which are gender, age and a little bit of geography.

Then you always end up with the same bias; I call it the urban bias. That is, you always end up with rural and northern hospitals being at a disadvantage compared to the ones located in bigger urban areas. This fixed amount of money for procedures works for some, but it doesn't work for all. I agree that if a centre does a thousand whatever, hip replacements—that's a little much; we'll say cataract surgeries. If you do a thousand cataract surgeries every week, you will get very good at it. You will develop good practice and you will have good outcomes. But it also means that you are geographically located in one area.

Unless those centres of excellence have an incentive to travel to make sure that they are available and that we provide equity of access to all of our residents, then it won't happen. It will always be the same: The big urban centres will get to compete for a number of procedures. They will be able to do them at a cheaper price than you can do them in northern or rural Ontario. Then all of the services will be centralized there, making access an issue.

It has already started. If you look at total knee and total hip replacements, Sudbury Regional Hospital does those surgeries, but there is a long waiting list. So what happens? People from northeastern Ontario decide to go down to Toronto. But who can go down? People who are fit, people who are healthy and people who have the money to undertake the travel, which means that the people who have the highest needs end up waiting their turn in Sudbury while the people with the lower needs get to go to Toronto. This just creates a snowball effect where, if you have patients with higher needs, sure, it will be more expensive to look after them. They will need more follow-up, they will need longer hospital stays and they will need more rehab, which means that when Sudbury Regional Hospital is made to compete for a volume of total knee or total hip replacements, they will lose out. They will lose out because a healthy segment of their population is already migrating to Toronto, where they can do that surgery cheaper and faster with good outcomes partly because, out of the rural and northern area, they get all of the healthier patients. They get the patients who are able to go. They get the people who are still active, as opposed to northern and rural hospitals that don't. This new funding model will just make all of this worse.

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It is important upfront, and I would have liked to have seen this in the throne speech, to have a commitment from our government for equitable access. We realize that we're not going to have equal access; that is, if you choose to live in northern or rural Ontario, you may not have the same. Nobody wants a tertiary care centre in Naughton; we realize that. But we want equitable access.

Let's make equity part of the throne speech so that before we make any changes that will further put this urban bias onto our health care system, we commit ourselves to equity. But this is not there. What we are looking at is a system of competitions between hospitals, which will not serve the people of rural and northern Ontario well.

We've already experimented with competitive bidding in home care with disastrous results. I would have loved so much to have seen in the throne speech a real commitment to reviewing our home care system with a view to getting rid of this competitive bidding for home care, which has not served us well.

The government, to their credit, invested \$1.8 billion more in home care. What did we get out of this? Worse care, worse outcomes and less people served. This is a lose-lose for us, but we have a few American-based home care companies that made a pile of cash. I don't want our home health care resources to be going to fund for-profit American-based care. I want the money that will be invested in our health care system to go to front-line services. I didn't see any of this in the throne speech. I sure hope that the budget brings better news.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have no doubt, since I listened very carefully to my colleague from Nickel Belt, that she tries to improve the conditions of the people in northern Ontario. I've been to Nickel Belt a number of times. In fact, I have my undergraduate degree from Laurentian University, so I have some idea. While I was there, I grew very fond of the people of Nickel Belt and Sudbury. I have no doubt we admire all of them for their hard work.

But I was expecting that you would indicate a bit more of the positive nature and the positive issues that are found in this throne speech. It can't just be all negative.

If we start from a negative perspective, oh, by golly, you don't remember anymore what happened to the NDP when they were in power? Fourteen mills shut down, the highest unemployment rate ever in the province of Ontario in northern Ontario, and \$60 million taken out of the northern Ontario heritage fund. Whereas, what did the Liberals do? What do you find in the throne speech? What's our record? To some degree you were beginning, you were just starting to say, "to the credit of the government." But then you stopped right there, and you began to be critical, and you began to protest again, which is, of course, a natural part of the NDP, to protest, whereas the Liberal Party is the party of progress.

I just want to remind you of what is also in the throne speech that is very important, and that is the Premier has recognized that we have to compete. We have to compete internationally. How best to do that? How best do we prepare our students to compete internationally with all those countries that are called the tigers of the East? The best way to do it is through education. The Liberals have recognized that, and I congratulate them because it's part of the throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The first thing I want to do is compliment my friend from Nickel Belt on, I think, a very thoughtful and interesting discourse on the throne speech, with specific references to the issues that she has to face every day in her riding, and that's what this debate is about. It's not about looking for positives in the throne speech, as my friend opposite has to say. We, on this side of the House, are opposition. Our job is to oppose. So while the government sets out its vision, our job is to say, "Your vision is lacking somewhat in certain areas."

The first thing that struck me was the focus that my friend from Nickel Belt put on the forestry industry and the fact that so much machinery is mothballed and so many jobs lie unfulfilled because they don't exist anymore. The government has not even made passing reference to the forestry industry in the throne speech at all.

I am not a northerner. I'm a southerner, and I'm very conscious of the fact that there is a divide between north and south and that northerners feel that they get—and I think rightfully so, by the way—short shrift from the south. I have had a lot of interaction with the north lately, and very particularly with the forestry industry, in talking to the folks at Grant Forest Products. That has been the subject of a number of questions that I've raised with the government in this House.

One of the things that has come to light is that there are hundreds of millions of dollars in funds that relate to the forestry industry that are not being used, that could be used, not even in terms of real money but just loan guarantees to make progress in the forestry industry, to revitalize the north, to give some people back their jobs who need jobs. It's just lying fallow on the part of the government, with not so much as a reasonable response from the Minister of Northern Affairs. That's the thing that has to be underlined. That's what my friend is trying to underline, and I congratulate her for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Jim Brownell: I too want to congratulate and thank the member from Nickel Belt for her comments and certainly her passion for the north and for her riding. She gave us a good summary of the problems that relate to the lack of clean water and whatnot.

I would like to talk about that just for a moment. I had a chance yesterday to make a few comments about the opportunities that we will have in exporting our expertise and technology. That's what it's really all about: that we get here in Ontario that opportunity to showcase to the world and give that opportunity to the world what we do best, and that is to plan for and to have the expertise in purifying and cleaning water and whatnot. That is what's going to be given to those countries that want it, and we know that there are many that have already indicated their interest in getting some of that expertise. I know that because we have a company in my own riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry that is very interested, not only in Ontario but throughout the world, in helping to bring clean water to those who want it.

Just yesterday I had the director of the Upper Canada District School Board in my office. He was talking about those opportunities in China for educating. In our throne speech we're looking to give opportunities to 20,000 more students in our colleges and universities and to give opportunities for foreign students to come here. Certainly they want that. I know that the director of the Upper Canada board would like to see more pre-college and -university students coming to our province to receive education. Those are all the opportunities that are going to be given here in this Open Ontario plan that we had in the throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to also compliment the member from Nickel Belt. I have the greatest respect for the work that she does, both in the Legislature here as well as in the community as well as in committees. In fact, I think she, with the health coalition, has been travelling the province, working very hard to raise awareness and education of the lack of adequate funding in long-term care, as well as hospital-based services and community-based services.

In her response, she was saying that the lack of attention to the north is extremely important as well. She's a very strong, very effective voice for not only Nickel Belt, the region where she is the member, but also for the issue of health care broadly and, more specifically, issues facing the north.

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I think that if one looks at this throne speech and the debate on it—I'm disappointed. It's the lack of having a vision for the province, a lack of courtesy to the different sectors within the province, and it's as if there is a Dalton McGuinty plan that Father Knows Best. That's ultimately what I see in it, and I will have the privilege this morning, I hope, to speak on this throne speech. I might possibly be the last speaker on it—it's not the last word.

Again, I want to pay tribute to the member from Nickel Belt and her strong voice for the north. As my good friend from Thornhill has said in his questions—relentless questions, I might add—on the forest industry. There's a lack of a significant plan or the flexibility of the government to work to find solutions for specific sectors, whether it's on the waste-to-energy issue within the north that was brought up in her remarks, or to find a resolution to the financial stress for one of the companies that Mr. Shurman has spoken about. Again, she's a strong, effective voice and I think her remarks are a tribute to her, but also a condemnation of the government's lack of a plan and vision for the north and for many—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Nickel Belt has time to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank the members from Davenport, Thornhill, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, and Durham for their comments. Yes, I'm in opposition, so as for the comments for the member from Davenport, I listened to the throne speech with a view of

my constituents. When I listen for my constituents, I have to think forestry, I have to think clear water because it doesn't seem to mean the same thing to the people of Nickel Belt and of northern Ontario as to the people who wrote the throne speech. It is not negative. I also brought forward solutions that could be included, hopefully, in the budget when it comes on Thursday.

Sure, I listened with an ear that represents the people that I'm here to represent, but I also bring forward some suggestions that I hope they will listen to and act upon.

Certainly I agree with the member from Thornhill. I'm here to represent the people of Nickel Belt, so when I look at the throne speech, like when I look at everything else, I look through the eyes of my constituents to make sure that they are well represented. He is right that I hear it quite a bit: We don't mind the government helping the people of the south get through this recession and get jobs in the auto and manufacturing industries; we just don't want to be left behind. We don't want to be forgotten. We want our fair share. I hear this all the time. People come in to my office after having lost their jobs in forestry or other industries in the north, and all they want is a fair share from the Ontario government. Right now, they don't feel like they are getting this.

The exporting of our expertise in clean water technology: Start exporting it to the people of northern Ontario first, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to indicate at the outset that I'll be sharing my time with the very distinguished member from Essex.

I'd like to talk about the throne speech to show a contrast between looking forward to a future, as our Ontario government does, that's bright and prosperous, and compare that with a vision of sticking your head into the sand and hoping that when you pull it out the 1950s will have returned, such as the Conservatives have.

Let's start by looking at the global recession. Again, as a contrast, the PCs spent a whole year pretending that the recession wasn't happening, and then they proposed out-and-out panic as a response when it did begin, suggesting that in response to the recession, the only thing that the government of Ontario really ought to do would be to completely dismantle education, health care and our social programs as perhaps the only solution. Our government never agreed with that; Ontarians never agreed with that approach.

What Ontarians wanted was to have their government prepare this province to compete in the aftermath of the global recession. The Conservatives said that Ontario was toast until and unless the United States recovered, and if we couldn't sell to America, then we probably shouldn't be doing business anywhere else. Our government didn't agree with that approach. Our government has patiently, persistently and successfully opened new markets for what Ontario does and for the services that Ontarians can perform in markets like India, China and Europe. While the American market was flat, and the

Conservatives said that we ought to hunker down and basically do nothing unless and until America dug itself out, this year, China is projecting 10% growth and India is projecting about 7.6% growth.

How important are those markets? Comparing China with Ontario, China outnumbers Ontario 100 to 1. That's an immense market. India outnumbers Ontario 85 to 1. A market like Brazil, which I'm sure the members opposite look upon as a Third World market—we don't. We know it's an emerging market, and we know that Brazil outnumbers us here in Ontario 15 to 1. We also know that Europe is a market that's larger than the United States of America. Europe is a First World market. As Ontarians, we are not in Europe to the degree that we should be. As a measure of how much potential there is in that European market, consider that just one US company alone, the Home Depot, sells more to and from Canada than the country of France. That gives us an idea of how much untapped potential there is for Ontario in Europe, in India, in Brazil and in China. Our government is there, and that party says we shouldn't be.

To again compare and contrast, when this global recession hit Ontario, this government responded with an aggressive stimulus plan; those parties on the other side said we shouldn't do it. Our government invested in infrastructure to create jobs; they opposed it. Our government introduced new training programs for laid-off workers; they opposed them and criticized them. We believed in Ontarians; they didn't. In the next five years, we're going to have a decisive period for our province. That's why we have a new five-year plan to open up Ontario to new growth and to new jobs. They don't believe in Ontarians. Our plan is going to prepare Ontario to compete in the global economy that those parties opposite pretend doesn't exist. We're going to emerge from this recession much, much stronger than we were when we went in.

Our party, our government and Ontarians believe that tax acts are just pieces of law that need to stay in touch with their times. We believe that tax acts exist to serve Ontarians. Contrast that with the attitude opposite. The Progressive Conservatives believe Ontarians are here to serve the tax act, and that a Cold War relic such as the expensive, out-of-date, cumbersome and inefficient provincial sales tax is in fact a monument to a distant past Conservative government and must therefore never, ever be changed at all for any reason whatsoever.

To that Ontarians say, "Rubbish. We can do better. We will do better." Ontarians don't believe that we should never be able to compete in China, in India, in South America and in Europe. We believe that those are our markets, just as they are anybody else's markets. Ontarians don't believe that if the USA has a dumb and inefficient sales tax system, then ours ought to be at least as stupid and as expensive. We reject that approach.

Our government does not believe that Ontarians should never be able to compete in this world, and that's why Ontario is adopting a lean, efficient and money-saving means of assessing a sales tax. That's why, on our

government's watch, Ontario has now gained a sustainable competitive advantage over our US competitors. We intend to keep that advantage. We intend to keep that advantage, because it's the right thing to do and it's the smart thing to do for Ontarians.

This throne speech is just a piece in the mosaic that spells out a five-year plan to ensure that Ontario is the best place on the North American continent to start a business, to grow a business and, very importantly, to relocate a business. We're there.

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We believe in health care. We contrast that with the party opposite that seems to take its lead from—and in the spirit of the times—the United States' Republican Party, which absolutely is adamantly opposed to public health care. We believe in that. It gives us a sustainable competitive advantage right here in Canada. Ontario businesses know full well that Ontario-style one-payer health care allows them a competitive advantage that they cannot get in a plant south of the border.

Since we formed government, we've worked with health professionals to lower wait times—wait times that continue to go lower. Contrast that with the party opposite that, on their watch in government, never even measured wait times. But if you measure it, you can manage it. And if you can manage it, you can lower it, you can optimize it and you can control your costs, and that's exactly what Ontario has seen in the last seven years.

Look at some results: 900,000 more Ontarians have access to a family doctor. Where do you find the lowest wait times in the entire country? Ontario—shorter wait times for cancer surgeries; shorter wait times for MRIs.

When we were elected in 2003, my hospital, Credit Valley Hospital, had a new cancer centre that had just opened, and it had bays for six linear accelerators. We had two. On our watch, we now have all six. Not coincidentally, we've now seen our wait times in western Mississauga, where we have a strong, growing population, go down even as our population grows. We need to do more, because health care is a journey, not a destination.

Health care is also expensive. Just 20 years ago, 32 cents of every dollar spent on government programs was spent on health care. Today it's 46 cents.

Beginning next year, in 2011, the first of the baby boom generation, the largest demographic bubble that Canada has ever seen and, indeed, North America has ever seen—those first baby boomers turn 65. For every senior alive today, when we baby boomers are ourselves in the peak of our senior years, there will be two seniors. For every person aged 80 or above alive today, when we baby boomers ourselves become octogenarians, there will be three. Those are immense challenges for us. They mean that we have to manage our health care programs properly. The thinking and planning that we do now is going to mean the difference, if you're a baby boomer, between whether the health care that you've grown up around is going to be there when you need it most or whether it won't be.

On our watch, our thinking has been directed to ensure that an entire baby boom generation that has built this country over the last 20 years can look forward to reliable, cost-effective and available health care when and where they need it as they age.

Of course, the members opposite have voted against that at every single turn. I know they don't believe in health care for the baby boom generation. I know their plan is to neglect them and to simply say, "Sorry, we can't afford it. You're out of the boat. Go buy it yourself." But that's not the way that we've run our government, and that's not the way we will run our government. That's part of the reason that this throne speech has focused as heavily as it has on health care.

We need to hold our health care providers accountable for the money they get, and we need to ensure that those programs provide improved services for patients. That's part of the vision of where this throne speech is taking Ontario.

This throne speech says that Ontario is going to introduce new legislation to improve care in our hospitals and ask that our hospitals tap into the expertise of all health care professionals. This throne speech says that our government is going to improve services for patients by encouraging health care professionals to work together. That's exactly what health care professionals want to do, and that's what patients expect them to do.

We intend to create an independent expert body to provide recommendations on some of the best clinical practice guidelines. It ensures that future investments actually get the results that they set out to get and that they improve patient health.

In the last year and a half, our government has borrowed a lot of money, which really says something from a bunch of fiscally prudent managers who love balanced budgets. We borrowed a ton of money, and unlike the government from which we took power, we're not concealing a deficit. We're going to be upfront about this, and if we borrowed it, we'll lay out a plan to pay it back. That means opening Ontario to new jobs and growth, and that means our government has to manage and focus on those things, some of which I've outlined, that truly make us stronger.

As a government, we eliminated the deficit that we inherited from the former Conservative government, and before the recession hit, our government delivered three balanced budgets, three surpluses in a row. That's a record that we're going back to.

I'd like to conclude on that and let the member from Essex take the rest of the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Essex.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I'm delighted today to stand in support of the throne speech given by the Lieutenant Governor, which gives the sense of the direction that your government wants to go in the next five years, and to comment on a couple of areas of our Open Ontario plan.

My friend from Mississauga—Streetsville has made a very poignant discussion on some of the issues that have

touched a sore point with the opposition. Now that you're riled up, it's my job to settle you back down. So I'll try not to get you too excited, although I do want to point out two areas in the throne speech that, from my point of view, need particular attention.

I'll quote from one of them: "Your government will also support growth and expansion in our agri-food sector by working through Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to create new opportunities to buy local food, and open up new markets outside the province—because the world needs the good things that grow in Ontario."

I wholeheartedly agree with that, and I would encourage all members of the Legislature to support that kind of thrust in our throne speech. There is no area, I think, more diversified in agriculture in the province than in southwestern Ontario and, if I might boast just a little, in particular, in Essex county. My friend from Chatham—Kent—Essex shares that.

Mr. Kim Craitor: And around the lake.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My friend from Niagara Falls says that Niagara Falls is included in it. So there's my point: Southwestern Ontario is the most diversified agricultural area in the whole of Canada, and I would suggest that it would compare to many other parts of the world. There are two opportunities we have that we can encourage and have been working on, and that is to buy local.

If you think about buying local, it goes far beyond just supporting your own industry in your own area. It affects the environment when food doesn't have to be transported long distances. The quality of the food when you buy it at your local market hasn't travelled long distances. Can you imagine what it makes on our carbon imprint to bring a truckload of tomatoes from Mexico? Can you imagine, when those tomatoes were picked, what point in their growth they had to be in so they would be at least edible when they reach Canada?

I go to my local grocery store and I see tomatoes there that were grown in Mexico. The first thing I do is go to the manager and say, "I'm not going to buy any of your tomatoes because they're imported from Mexico and we grow them literally down the street." The manager will give me the excuse that there's nothing he can do about it because it's head office down in Toronto that decides where they're going to buy their produce from and at what price. But I think if enough of us go to the managers of these grocery stores and say, "We're not going to buy your produce," it wouldn't take very long, I suspect, before somebody down here in Toronto at the head office of that grocery store would hear what we have to say, and it's going to affect the jingle in their pockets. When you can do something that affects the jingle in their pockets, they'll start to listen to you. So I encourage everyone, whenever they buy, wherever they buy their produce, that they insist on locally grown produce. If we don't grow it, well, I suspect not too many people eat it, but sure, if there are specialty products that you can't get grown here in southwestern Ontario, go ahead and buy those.

We encourage our folks to do that because it helps the local economy, number one, but I think just as importantly, it helps our environment and the quality of the food exceeds the quality of food that's grown anywhere else in the world.

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The second point of the throne speech that I'd like to emphasize and point out to you is the Water Opportunities Act that will be introduced in the Legislature. In Essex county, where I live, of course, on three sides of my riding is water. On the north is Lake St. Clair, on the west is the Detroit River and on the south is one of the Great Lakes, Lake Erie. I'm virtually surrounded by water, so clean water is something that we are very understanding of in my part of the province. You know, folks, there is little in this world that is more important than water. We can go for a number of days—particularly some of us could go for a number of days—without eating very much, but we can't go very long without fresh water.

There are many parts of this world where fresh water is becoming a very valuable and depleting resource. We're told it's a \$400-billion-a-year industry of creating clean water and ways that we technically can take bad water—salty water, contaminated water—and turn it into clean water. I can tell you, that's an opportunity for the manufacturing businesses in my area, in the Essex-Windsor area, which have been hit so hard by the manufacturing losses we have suffered in this last worldwide recession.

So we can take that expertise in creating good, clean, potable water and combine that with our expertise in manufacturing—those tool and die industries down our way that can produce the equipment that will take the technology that we have to create clean, potable water. We can export that technology and those manufactured items to the rest of the world.

Those are only two areas of this throne speech, this Open Ontario plan, and we have to look ahead. We can't look back. I'm a private pilot and I always say the runway behind you is absolutely worthless. It's the runway ahead that's really valuable to you. So I say to us, take this vision, turn it into something that's good for Ontario, and I know that our future not only will be as good as the past, it will be better than the past, and I want us all to enjoy that better future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I couldn't help but think when I was listening to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville that he must have been auditioning for a role in 1984. The double-think that went into his speech was just incredible. Here he is talking about and conveying Conservative views in such a totally false fashion—just absolutely amazing.

I also have to talk about the member from Essex. Ontario has faced significant hardships. The loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs, the closure of 62 forestry mills, the loss of 45,000 forestry jobs, and

what do we hear from this government? Instead of talking about those important things, the member from Essex would rather talk about the carbon footprint of a Mexican tomato. It's really atrocious and astounding that this Liberal government can have its head in the sand and talk about platitudes with rhetoric and have no substance in the throne speech whatsoever—no substance.

I'll just go on to further say that last time we were in the House, I mentioned—there is a word called “daltonism.” It's a legitimate, real word: daltonism. It's the inability to distinguish between red and green, and that's what this Liberal government is suffering from. Whenever they see something green, we know it's going to put us in the red. This Liberal government and the comments on it, I just find totally unresponsive and—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions? The member—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was rather interesting to hear the member from Mississauga–Streetsville's little jab toward Sudbury and our relationship with the people of Brazil.

I had the pleasure to attend a rally yesterday where there were many representatives from Brazil, and I can assure you that the people of Sudbury welcome the Brazilian people and certainly have no grudge with the people of Brazil. They do not care too much, though, about one particular Brazilian company: Vale do Rio Doce, better known in Sudbury as Vale Inco. To confuse the two is to show really very little respect for the people of Sudbury. There were people from Australia, from Germany, from Indonesia and many people from Brazil who came yesterday to support the over 3,000 Vale Inco workers represented by United Steelworkers Local 6500 at their rally—to show their support, but they also know that they do this in co-operation and with the full support of the people of Brazil.

I had the opportunity to travel to Brazil and meet with representatives from the Brazilian government, and I can tell you that they aspired to come to the standards that we have for our workers. It is the Workers' Party that is in power in Brazil right now, led by President Lula, and they certainly look at what the people in Ontario have been able to achieve. Whether we look at the wages that allow us to have a healthy middle class, whether you look at the benefits, things as simple as being paid for a day off when you're sick—those are all things that we share with Brazil.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the members from Essex and Mississauga–Streetsville for their comments this morning. I have had an opportunity to hear some of the comments that have been made on a regular basis in the Legislature in response to our throne speech. I want to thank all members for their contributions.

One of the themes that has been coming forward in response to the throne speech from some of the oppo-

sition members continues to deal with forestry and the challenges related to forestry in Ontario, primarily northern Ontario and more specifically northwestern Ontario. I think it's a bit unfortunate to hear the simplistic arguments that continue to be put on the record by members of the opposition. For whatever reason—I guess it's one of those advertising things: You figure that if you keep repeating the same message over and over again, after a while, enough people are going to start to believe you.

Just to take one point on the forestry industry in northwestern Ontario—northern Ontario generally—in 2003 when we were elected, the Canadian dollar stood at 73 cents. One or two years ago, maybe three years ago, it topped out at \$1.10. Today, it's around \$1 or 98 cents—I'm not sure what it's at today. That's an incredible appreciation in the value of the Canadian currency relative to the American currency. One penny of appreciation in the value of the Canadian dollar relative to the American dollar adds a \$3-million to \$4-million expense to one AbitibiBowater mill, the one in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan in the province of Ontario. Some \$3 million to \$4 million on one cent of appreciation in the Canadian currency times 35 or 45 cents; that's over \$100 million to their bottom line. That's one AbitibiBowater mill in Ontario. In my riding, it's like a \$100-million expense on their bottom line. Corporately in the province, times the number of mills that they have, it's much more significant than that, and yet the members of the opposition want to stand up there day after day, year after year, continuing to convey this ridiculously simplistic message when it comes to forestry in this province—

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Mr. Bill Mauro: —just the truth once in a while.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. I'd ask you to withdraw that.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'll withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: Respectfully, I thought the member from Mississauga–Streetsville read the notes that were prepared for him by the minister quite nicely. I think he's an effective reader.

The member from Essex: I thought his comments were quite genuine and thoughtful. He didn't stray too much from the message track of the government; I understand that.

Mr. Mauro, the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan: When he was standing up for the forest industry, he took some credit for the increase in the dollar. I would say that the issue there, Bill—you actually have it wrong. When the currency—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. Your comments to the—

Mr. John O'Toole: When the currency increases in Canada, it disfavours your company. I want you to go back to Economics 101—and I'm not being critical. I'm

trying to help you. It disadvantages Canadian industry when the dollar goes up. I'm telling you; look it up. I have the greatest respect for the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Direct your comments—

Mr. John O'Toole: —to the Speaker. She likes to have her time as well. I'm actually having an opportunity to—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: My hands are up.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: He's using sign language.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's all sign language.

My point is, all of their comments aren't addressing the fundamental issues of the decline in the Ontario economy. That's the real truth here in the observations on the economy: They promise one thing and do another thing. They promised a million jobs, but they've actually lost 150,000 jobs.

I'll have more to say on this in the next few minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to acknowledge the comments by the members for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington and Durham. I guess the truth still does hurt Conservatives.

Our government does not believe that some animals or some tomatoes are created more equal than others.

I wish the member from Durham would stop reading those talking points from the kids who work out of the corner office on the third floor and just tell us what he thinks, because I think he actually does support us.

To the member for Nickel Belt: Our government definitely believes that Ontarians and Brazilians ought to get to know one another better and do a great deal more business together. We speak almost every language in the world right here in Ontario, and that's a big competitive advantage. The whole world has people who now call themselves Ontarians. That's part of the reason why this speech from the throne lays out a very clear blueprint for reaching beyond where we are now and ensuring that as Ontarians, we're best positioned to do business everywhere in the world, with every culture and every people in every language—a strength that we uniquely possess here.

To the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan: He gets it. He knows that if Ontario is going to find a sustainable market for what the north does and what the north has, then we need to reach out to those parts of the world that need what we have, that need to use what we have in abundance so they can continue to progress. This is a symbiotic world. What you do in one part of the world has an implication and impact in every other.

This throne speech is part of a series of documents and policies. It will be continued, I'm sure, in the budget this week, which lays out a progressive, successful, sustainable future for the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak. Hopefully I'll be the last speaker for the 12 hours that have been debated on the throne speech.

I have a copy here for those viewing today. This throne speech was delivered on March 8, and here we are on March 23, we're still talking about it, but really, actually, nothing has been done.

I want to start by thanking the Honourable David Onley for reading the speech prepared by Premier McGuinty so eloquently. There's no question it was very eloquently delivered in the Legislature. I also want to say that the media overview was rather a neutral interpretation of Premier McGuinty's speech. I'm going to take a small survey of the media here. Now, I'm not making this up. I'm actually trying to bring some third party commentary to the debate.

Here's one here from the Toronto Sun. It says: "Bankrupt of Fresh Ideas." That's what the paper said. This is on March 9, the day after: "Bankrupt of Fresh Ideas." We like to think of it as they're out of gas; they're sputtering. The economy's going this way and the spending is going this way. They're in chaos, collapse, much like—Madam Speaker, through you—the time when I was the chair of the budget in Durham, in Clarington, in my riding. I met with Ed Philip and Floyd Laughren. Their economy was going into the tank, the NDP, and the expenditures for social programs and needed programs were going this way. They were out of control and they finally evoked the social contract. I think this article is quite accurate. I'd encourage people to read it.

On the other side of it, the same clipping, it's here—this is the Toronto Star. The Toronto Star is the Liberal-friendly media rag. We call it the Liberal briefing notes. It says, "No Big Cuts, Despite Deficit." They have no plan to deal with it.

Now, what is the deficit? Let's put things in perspective. The budget is approximately \$106 billion and the deficit is \$25 billion. So, in other words, they're borrowing about 25 cents on every dollar they're spending. That's like a household buying a new car just after one of the parents lost their job. That's the equivalent.

This really comes down to jobs and the economy. There is no plan in this, not just for my riding of Durham but for Ontario. It's a dismal—I'm just repeating what the media says here: "Bankrupt of Fresh Ideas." And they have a list here. It says, "\$400-billion-a-year demand for clean-water technology." Sounds good; where's the money? You're going to pay it when you turn on the tap, just like you're going to pay when you turn on the switch for electricity.

Green energy, very nice idea—excellent idea, in fact, implemented with the right kind of tools, technology and partnerships with the universities? No, they went to Korea, to get the jobs and the technology from Korea. What an insult to our universities of Toronto, Western, Waterloo to have to go to—I just can't believe the lack of confidence in our own institutions. When you think about it, what signal is that to our innovation economy? The

work done by Richard Florida and Roger Martin on innovation and creativity: There isn't a word in here about that except to go to Ms. Pupatello, the minister, going over to China and India and all over the world. It should be here. It's not buy Korea, it's buy Ontario, buy Canada. There's nothing in here on this and I'm so gravely disappointed.

Here's another very excellent article I recommend to the viewers and those listening or reading Hansard at some future date. This one is from the *Globe and Mail*, a reasonable, balanced paper, often pro-government, which is fine. But here's what it says: "Canada's Greece?" We're all following Greece and the European Common Market and their problems. They're in the tank; they're falling off the cliff. That's what they said. This is done by a renowned expert, Boyd Erman. "Canada's Greece? Ontario Better Get Its Act Together" is what it says.

But not only that—the legitimacy for these comments isn't mine. I'm going to read these. What it says here is "former central bank Governor David Dodge"—this guy is brilliant. He exceeds anything I or anyone else here, including the Premier, could ever say on the economy. This says that David Dodge suggests it is "a significant 'structural' deficit that will persist and grow even worse when the economy fully rebounds." We have a structural deficit just like Greece. He goes on: "Mr. Dodge told a business audience in Toronto last week that Ontario's spending is outpacing revenue growth so quickly that the result will be a structural deficit" of 3.5% of the province's economy by 2020.

Each point in the economy represents about a billion and a half dollars of revenue when it goes up. When it goes down, you lose the revenue of \$1.5 billion and your expenditures go up. What do I see now? The perfect storm, because that's exactly what's happening. I say it with some anguish, and I see nothing from the Premier or his finance minister—absolutely no plan. They avoided the questions that were asked by our leader, Tim Hudak, yesterday on the rising price of energy. This is a non-discretionary product. People—seniors in their homes; students; elderly, frail people that have oxygen in their homes—energy prices are going to double.

Why do I say that? There's quite an interesting part. The new tax, the \$56-billion tax, has been added to the electricity bill, and it's only about four cents—right now they're selling wind power. They're getting companies in my riding, wind power and solar power—solar power: 80 cents a kilowatt hour, but they're selling it for four and a half to five cents, so they're subsidizing it by 70-some cents a kilowatt hour.

We all say, "I would like to be like Denmark as well." What's the price of energy in Denmark? It's 34 cents. What is our energy? It's about five or six cents. That means your electricity bill of \$200 a month—I'm talking directly to the seniors of Ontario—is going to be \$600. Write a letter to Dalton McGuinty or, better still, in October 2011, mark the ballot for someone that stands up for you, as opposed to one solution fits all, the big solution—our guys.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 42(a), there have been 12 hours of debate on the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne. I am now required to put the question.

On March 9, 2010, Mr. Johnson moved, seconded by Mrs. Van Bommel, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of Mr. Johnson's motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote is deferred until deferred votes following question period.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from York West, to welcome students from Cardinal McGuigan high school and their teacher, Mr. Joseph Pulcini, who will be joining us today in the east gallery.

On behalf of the member from Vaughan and page Catia Marceau, we'd like to welcome her mother, Giulia Marceau, to the east members' gallery.

On behalf of the member from Brampton West and page Colin Boyle, I'd like to welcome his father, Bill Boyle, to the Legislature today.

On behalf of the member from Ottawa—Orléans and page Anne-Marie Chamberland, we'd like to welcome her father, Denys Chamberland, here today.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I don't know if I missed it, but Mary Beth Caliciuri is here. She is Anthony Caliciuri's mom, and he's one of our pages from North Bay. Welcome to her.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'd like to welcome Connie Neilipovitz, who is visiting with her son Ben, who is a page here in the Legislature. Welcome again, Connie.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Acting Premier: As the Acting Premier knows, due to uncontrolled spending in recent years, the global crisis and a record budget

deficit, Greece finds itself teetering on the brink of economic devastation. So it has come as a shock to Ontario families to hear experts like David Rosenberg of investment firm Gluskin Sheff say that Dalton McGuinty's own record deficits and debt mean that Ontario "risks becoming the Greece of Canada within a decade or two." Similar comments have been made by Moody's and David Dodge, the former Bank of Canada governor.

Acting Premier, can you imagine how much greater the shock of Ontario families when they find out that unemployment in Ontario is actually higher than unemployment in Greece?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I was pleased when the bond rating agencies maintained Ontario's credit rating last year after the budget. I'm also pleased that in fact this government, unlike previous governments, actually paid down debt for its first six years.

There is no doubt that countries like Greece and others, who have a much worse record in terms of deficit and debt, have much higher deficit-to-GDP ratios, much higher deficit-to-revenue ratios than Ontario—not even in the same category—are confronting challenges.

But the plan this government has laid out is the right plan. It will get us back to balance. It will build on the great strengths of this province. It's a plan, unlike a plan that they have yet to present.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, Ontario under Dalton McGuinty is on track to actually doubling its debt. We find out the minister has no plan to get the books back in order. Not only is unemployment in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario higher than in Greece; Ontario has fallen behind 100 countries, including Bulgaria, the Central African Republic and South Korea.

In fact, we don't even have to look outside North America to see a frightening comparison. California's economy is in such bad shape, it has many wondering whether the state will collapse under its own debt and be bailed out by the national government in the States. California's population is three times larger than Ontario's. Acting Premier, why is Ontario's deficit just as big and bad as California's?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Actually, California can't run deficits, and that's why they're laying off teachers and firefighters, closing schools and closing hospitals. That is what that leader and his party will do. They will close schools. They will close hospitals. They will lay off teachers. They will lay off nurses. They will cut the very services that are extremely—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will come to order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —closing hospitals, closing schools, laying off teachers, laying off nurses. We saw that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. I'm finding it extremely difficult to hear both the questions and the answers.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That's their plan. Premier McGuinty and this government have a plan to build on our public services while restoring a balanced budget over a period of time. There's no doubt that jurisdictions around the world are coping with these problems. Ontario is no different. Unlike that member, this government has a plan that will work for a better future—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: We don't need any lectures from this finance minister who's running the biggest deficit in the history of the province while laying off nurses, while closing down ERs and handing out sweetheart deals to his Liberal friends.

I ask you to look across the border in your hometown to Michigan. Michigan, as we all know, is having very difficult times. It's a state much like Ontario, but unemployment in Ontario is actually higher than in Ann Arbor, Lansing or Kalamazoo. Michigan has a higher standard of living and a lower population.

But the Ontario PC caucus believes that Ontario's best days are still ahead of us. We believe Ontario can lead again. I'll ask the minister to stop following the example of Greece, stop following the example of California, and bring forward a budget that will actually lower taxes and create jobs in the province of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Unlike California, unlike Michigan, unlike Ohio, unlike West Virginia, employment has gone up 95,000 in Ontario since last May. We still have more to do.

Unfortunately, there are far too many people out of work in this province, but that leader and his party want to put more people out of work. They want to put nurses out of work. They want to put teachers out of work. They want to close more hospitals than the 39 they closed the last time they were in office. The people of Ontario rejected that once; they'll reject it again. They will embrace a plan that builds on the great strengths of this province and will restore prosperity to this great province in a meaningful and balanced way over the course of the next few years.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier: No doubt the desperate cry of the finance minister drowning in debt and job losses that have taken Ontario from being an engine in Canada to a have-not province—six years of Liberal failure that cost us 200,000 jobs in 2009 alone.

Today, through Facebook, I'm launching 10for2010.ca, our Ontario PC caucus website with 10 good ideas that, if implemented immediately, will get

Ontario's economy back on course and help create well-paying jobs again.

One of the ideas is to suspend payroll taxes. Why you'd want to tax businesses finally hiring today is beyond me. Minister, will you adopt the PC plan to suspend payroll taxes and help create jobs in our province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No. He might want to talk to his federal colleagues who are raising employment insurance premiums—almost \$12 billion over the next two years to help pay down their deficit.

I hope his 10 plans don't include closing 39 more hospitals like they did before. I hope his 10 points do not involve calling nurses hula hoops—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North will please come to order.

Minister.

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: I hope his 10 points don't include shutting down child care in this province the way his federal brethren want to do. I hope his 10 points don't involve laying off more water inspectors or laying off environmental inspectors. I hope your plan doesn't include saying one thing and doing another, like you did on the HST.

There's no doubt Ontario faces challenges. Premier McGuinty has got—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I guess the finance minister hasn't seen the Facebook video that launches 10for2010.ca, because the nanny Premier banned access to Facebook among government computers in our province. When you go home and visit my Facebook page, you'll see another plan to help small businesses coping with the growing creep of red tape that has come across the Dalton McGuinty government. In our 10for2010.ca plan, we're calling for a reinstatement of the Red Tape Commission and a freeze on your job-killing regulations until that commission is in place. We believe that small businesses need to be freed up for what they do best: creating jobs and investing in our province.

Minister, will you follow our advice and help cut red tape in the province and create jobs again?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, I hope on his Facebook page he'll tell small business why he voted against the 20% tax cut we gave them in our last budget. I hope he'll tell small businesses why he voted against removing all of those other tax impediments to small business growing in this province. I hope he'll tell them on Facebook that his own expert witness says that this government has a plan to create 600,000 jobs over the next 10 years. That's not our witness. That's their witness.

That member and his people can put as many plans on Facebook as they want. I suppose it will be the Facebook Common Sense Revolution. Ontario rejected that once, and they'll reject it again. This government has a plan. That party has no plan. Ontario's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here we go again. Part of their promise is somehow to create a million new jobs in Ontario when we lost 200,000 last year alone—they say that by slapping 8% down on gas for your car, heat for your home and all kinds of new services, that's somehow going to create jobs in our province. This is definitely a finance minister who's lost in Wonderland.

Also on our 10for2010.ca website, the minister will see a good plan to review runaway spending, following other North American jurisdictions, to bring in a sunset review for every agency, board and commission to justify its existence and find better ways to improve quality of services, starting with your local health integration networks, which have diverted \$200 million out of health care into bureaucracy.

Minister, will you at least implement a sunset—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We constantly review all programs and services. Indeed, the rate of growth in expenditures in this government under the last few years is far below the rate of growth in expenditures of that government. The member and his Facebook friends like Mike Harris and others—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That plan was rejected seven years ago, and it will be rejected by the people of Ontario again. They want their governments to balance budgets, and we will. But we will do so as we make crucial investments to preserve the important gains we've made in health care, in education, in child care and in child services. There's no doubt that there are difficult decisions. This government takes them and takes them in the best interests of the people of Ontario, unlike what that member and his party did when they were—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. The McGuinty government's throne speech claimed clean water technology would bring thousands of jobs to Ontario, but just two days after the throne speech was delivered, General Electric announced that they would be closing a clean water technology plant in Burlington and moving operations to Hungary. Was this part of the McGuinty government's plan?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The undertakings the government has made in the area of clean water are very important, and there is no doubt that as we move forward and try to build that better future for this province there will be setbacks. There will also be gains associated with embracing new technologies and new industries in a way that that member and her party don't want to do.

We want to build a better future for Ontario, and the throne speech is the first part of that. We'll have more to say about it in the upcoming budget.

I reject the premise of her question. We believe Ontario will seize and will build this great new industry in Ontario—22,000 jobs already. We're going to move forward, while she and her party want to move backward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The technology used in that plant was designed right here in Ontario. Zenon was a world leader in water filtration with roots here in Ontario. Now the company is owned by GE, which is planning to build a centre of excellence for clean water technology in Hungary and taking good jobs out of Ontario. When this government waxed on about opening Ontario to the world, is that what it meant?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That is precisely why we need a Water Opportunities Act to ensure that we do everything we can to prevent that sort of thing from happening. I hope the member and her party will embrace this legislative opportunity, which will help us work in this growing industry.

She's right: It's a competitive world out there. When she proposes to raise corporate taxes, she proposes to chase those companies out of Ontario. When she talks about issues like this, that just builds our resolve to bring in the act. My hope is that she and her party will support the act to ensure that situations like that don't happen again. That is precisely why we're bringing in this kind of legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier and his ministers talk about Open Ontario, but all I see are plants closing and more jobs disappearing day after day after day.

Yesterday, the Minister of Trade claimed that she had a secret plan to save 550 jobs at Siemens. Those jobs have gone to North Carolina. Now the McGuinty government tells us they have a plan to create clean water jobs, but those jobs are already gone too, to Hungary. When it comes to jobs, why should we believe anything—anything at all—that this government has to say?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In spite of the downturn in the world economy since last May, Ontario has seen more than 90,000 net new jobs. We have made investments to support and work with industries across the spectrum. When we came to the assistance of General Motors and Chrysler, that member and her party were against doing that. When we made investments in a range of other industries, including the forestry and mining sectors, that member and her party were against it.

There is no doubt that there is more to do. There is no doubt that as Ontario emerges from this downturn—and we are emerging from the downturn—we will build a better and stronger economy, including clean water technologies. She has made the case why we need the act. I only hope that she'll do what she says as opposed to saying one thing and doing another, which is her history and the history of her party.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. Some 350,000 women and men have lost good manufacturing or resource jobs since this government was elected a couple of years ago. Many more are worried about the future and their precious jobs. They see access to Ontario's natural resources and public money doled out to companies, but they don't see good jobs being created right here. When will the McGuinty government finally address this jobs crisis?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We began that two years ago. We began that when we invested in a range of industries, including the auto sector—400,000 jobs—which that member and her party voted against. We did that when we cut personal taxes and corporate taxes for businesses, which experts say will create 600,000 jobs and help the poorest in this province; that member and her party voted against it. We did that when we created the Green Energy Act, which will create 50,000 jobs in Ontario; that member and her party voted against it.

There's no doubt that there's more to do as Ontario comes out of this recession, but there's one thing we do know: The people of Ontario are the best, most skilled workforce around. We're going to continue to make those investments because Ontario is going to be bigger and better and stronger—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I would agree with the finance minister that we have the best skilled workers in all of the world. It's too bad they're all out of work.

Ontario's natural resources, our public assets, our tax dollars can actually be invested wisely to build our province and create good jobs here. But under this government, that is simply not happening. Whether it's Xstrata shipping resources across the border to Quebec for the manufacturing to happen there, whether it's General Electric shipping technology developed in Ontario to create jobs in Hungary or whether it's Vale Inco simply shutting Sudbury down, this government is not—is not—looking out for Ontarians who need good jobs.

When will we finally see a real strategy to create and protect good jobs here in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, there are 91,000 more jobs in Ontario than there were last May. We still have a ways to go to make up from the downturn of the US and world economies. There's more to do, and we'll continue to do that.

I'd remind her that, in fact, some 93% of Ontarians are working. Not everybody is unemployed. That being said, for those who are, we are going to continue to make the investments that we're making. We will continue through Employment Ontario, through Second Career and through our investments in a variety of industries to do the sorts of things that will help people get back to work as this economy grows and recovers.

The economy is growing again; it is going to recover. We'll continue to make the kinds of investments that governments ought to make in order to help sustain that new growth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday in Sudbury, I joined 5,000 striking Vale Inco workers and their families. Like too many companies operating in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, Vale has no ties to our province and no concern for the hard-working people who call Ontario home. The McGuinty government's no-strings-attached corporate tax giveaways are not a strategy and won't help people who need jobs to pay their bills.

When will this government finally clue in and deliver a real plan to get Ontarians back to work?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, I think the people of Ontario see through her rhetoric. They recognize that we are in an extremely difficult and competitive world economy and that there are enormous challenges on all fronts.

All of us will continue to make the investments to build a better future for Ontario and build more jobs across a range of sectors, including the mining sector. We'll have more to say about that on Thursday. We have a great belief in the future of this province's economy, and we have the right policies to build employment, to build jobs and to grow this economy back to where it was before the world recession hit.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday, you said that the budget won't have new taxes, but on the same day, Enbridge and Union Gas representatives told the general government committee that the McGuinty Liberals want to slap the new energy tax on home heating bills.

You've been found out about your secret back-door tax on hydro. Are the McGuinty Liberals going to tax home heating fuel, too?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member again comes to this House, just like yesterday when he came to the Legislature and said that a regulation wasn't on the registry. Obviously, he could not find it himself through his own computer. Now that his leader has a new website, I'm going to suggest that his leader perhaps give him directions as to how to get onto that website, because he may need them.

Getting back to the member's question: No, we have not made any decisions to move forward with any allocations with regard to the gas industries. We're always looking for ways to conserve. It's the best possible way for us to get the best value for consumers. We'll continue to work with all partners in the energy sector on ways to provide better conservation initiatives. But the answer is no.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, well, well. This wasn't the first time that Dalton McGuinty said something different than one of his ministers. It wasn't even the first time yesterday.

Minister Duguid twisted himself in knots, saying the back-door energy tax wasn't a tax before the Premier said in fact it is a tax. The energy minister said it was a one-year deal, but later the Premier said he's looking for ways to keep gouging Ontario seniors and families on their energy bills.

Enbridge and Union Gas said you're eyeing them next, that "there have been a number of meetings" and "in terms of actual costs, that hasn't been determined at this time."

How much more will Ontario seniors and families pay because of the Liberals' tax on home heating fuel?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The fact of the matter is—and if this member understood what conservation does—these initiatives will save consumers money. They will help us avoid having to make much—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the member from Renfrew that he just asked a question. I can't hear the answer. Obviously, you can't either.

Hon. Brad Duguid: These initiatives will save consumers money. They help us avoid much more costly further investments in energy infrastructure and maintenance. They help us avoid having to make even more expansion of our green energy initiatives.

This is the most cost-effective way to handle our energy supply challenges. The member doesn't understand that. It doesn't come out of the blue. It was very much part of the Green Energy Act. If the member had read the act, he would have looked at section 26.1 and known that this was an initiative that this Legislature passed some time—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, yesterday we heard from 24 deputants in committee hearings on Bill 242. Almost all of them said the same thing: They were happy with Charles Pascal's report and they were hoping they were going to get all of Pascal's recommendations implemented. They never dreamed they'd get something different, and now they're worried. Their worry is that when you pull out the four- and five-year-olds from child care providers, you remove an important source of revenue. It's the revenue that subsidizes care for infants and younger children. Without it, they will be crippled and many will not survive, and those that do will have to increase fees. What are you going to do to ensure that daycare providers remain viable?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think that everyone in the House recognizes the importance of the legislative

process. We are a government that, when we introduce legislation, it then goes to committee. We very much value the input that we receive at the committee level. I think that our record demonstrates very clearly we listen to what is presented and there is an impact, and we have considered amendments.

The member has identified points that have been raised at committee; they have been raised with my office; they've been raised with my colleague, the minister responsible for children and youth. What I can say to this assembly this morning is that we are paying very close attention. We are absolutely committed to investing in our earliest learners. That is without question. We are taking a staged approach in terms of how this is going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, I'm glad you're listening—I really am—because this problem is not going away. There are going to be hearings today, and they're going to say the same thing. There will be hearings on Monday, and they will be saying the same thing. It's important that you are listening, because when you take the four- and five-year-olds out of those child care providers, it's going to hurt. When you take the preschool and after-school programs away from those child care providers, it's going to make it worse.

Are you, and when are you, going to provide stabilization funding that will allow schools to hold on to these providers as partners?

1100

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What I would say is that when you have four- and five-year-olds in a full-day learning program in our school communities, that's good for students and that's good for their parents. That's what we've been hearing across Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean—and the comments from the member from Peterborough are not helpful.

Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We know the member from Nepean is not supportive of full-day learning.

I do want to note that I have a quote that says, "It's a good initiative and we support the initiative.... It is a public good, it's good for kids, it's good for mothers and fathers...." That came from Rosario Marchese, the member from Trinity-Spadina.

So I can say to the honourable member, who thinks this is a very good initiative, that we are listening very carefully to those who are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: This question is for the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Today is Meet the Miners Day at Queen's Park, and I'd like to

take this opportunity to ask about our province's latest mineral development opportunity. In our government's throne speech earlier this month, we heard that the Ring of Fire is part of the Open Ontario plan. There's a lot of excitement about the Ring of Fire in the north. It is being hailed as one of the most promising mineral developments in northern Ontario in perhaps a century. While there's a lot of excitement around this opportunity, people are wondering how communities surrounding the Ring of Fire feel about it. I understand that last week, the minister visited four communities that surround the Ring of Fire. Would he please tell the House about that visit?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question; I appreciate it. Indeed, last week I did have the opportunity to visit four First Nations communities in the Ring of Fire: Neskantaga, Eabametoong, Marten Falls and Webequie. While I was there, I met with chiefs, councillors, elders and members of the community, stressing our government's commitment to working with them as the Ring of Fire project moves forward. Certainly the visit was a very valuable experience. It gave me and my staff an opportunity to continue to strengthen our relationship with the chiefs and the councils in those communities.

One very important thing that came out of our visit was the removal of a blockade on two frozen airstrips, a blockade that Marten Falls and Webequie had put up in the last two months. The removal of the blockade was a very positive step forward.

My ministry will continue to work closely with the First Nations and the companies with interests in the area to strengthen our relationships and see the Ring of Fire become a success and a benefit for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, after your visit I read in several news articles that Marten Falls Chief Elijah Moonias said that a big reason for the blockade coming down was due to the visit that you and your officials made last week. This is very positive news and is proof of the government's ongoing commitment to work with First Nations communities surrounding the Ring of Fire.

However, I also read that the removal of the blockade could be temporary if First Nations communities do not see progress in their talks with government and industry over the course of the next six months.

Would the minister please tell the House how you and your ministry plan on working with these First Nations communities in the near future?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank the member for the question. Certainly, when we see developments such as the Ring of Fire in the Far North, I believe it translates into hope and opportunity for those communities. Thus, it is incredibly important that we get it right and that it is managed correctly: done in a way that does address communities' environmental concerns and their need to be consulted, obviously, and provide good economic development opportunities. We now have a real opportunity to move forward.

Again, I want to assure you and the communities involved that my ministry will continue to work very, very closely with all of the communities affected as well as with industry. There are some tremendous partnerships being formed and we're seeing benefits arising already. At the prospectors and developers' convention, there was a signing between four First Nations, which again showed that that kind of co-operation and work can be done together. We're going to work very closely to see this happen.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also to the Acting Premier. A pattern has developed where the Premier and his cabinet ministers cannot seem to keep their stories straight. Premier McGuinty couldn't even get through announcing the Samsung deal before admitting that there won't be 16,000 jobs and that he gave away the store to get 1,400 full-time jobs. Later, Minister Duguid said that there might be as many as 4,400 full-time jobs. Did the energy minister make a rookie mistake, or was he just making things up, or was he admitting that the McGuinty Liberal sweetheart Samsung deal subsidized 3,000 jobs in Korea?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: There is so much misinformation in that question I'm not sure where to start. The fact is, and the Premier said this time and time again, the Samsung initiative will bring 16,000 jobs to this province—16,000 jobs that you don't support; 16,000 workers that would not otherwise be working; 16,000 families that are going to benefit from our green energy initiatives. That is just the start, because the Green Energy Act overall will bring 50,000 jobs to this province over the next three years.

We're very proud of the initiative. It really does provide a real boost of creating a hub here in Ontario. This initiative puts Ontario on the map internationally. Ontario is now the place, the destination when it comes to green energy development in the world—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The minister is right. I can't keep track of his numbers because they change every day and job numbers never come true.

Even though unemployment is lower in South Korea than Ontario, Dalton McGuinty is sending jobs to a country that the OECD ranks as one of the world's most industrious and he's making Ontario families and businesses pay for the honour of growing Korea's economy. Each time McGuinty slaps a new tax on energy bills, he raises business costs and drives jobs out of Ontario—200,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs.

Because he only has aspirational plans, Dalton McGuinty ended up subsidizing foreign companies like Samsung and Ubisoft to bring jobs to Ontario. When will the McGuinty Liberals stop treating energy as a social

policy and start making energy an economic policy so they can create jobs instead of buying them?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've just been informed that that famous website of the Leader of the Opposition says that you would cancel that Samsung initiative; you would give away those 16,000 jobs. You talk about being committed to jobs and yet when you see jobs being created here you want to distinguish whether they're construction jobs or not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. They were doing well for a while. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're building the economy of the future. We're building the next generation of jobs in this province. We're not going back to the energy policies that they want us to go back to, and those are the energy policies that involve reliance on coal. We're well past there. We're building this new economy on the next generation of jobs, on the green economy. We're leading the world. There is interest from all over the world in the work that we're doing here in this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Last week, our community of Hamilton suffered another economic blow. Siemens announced they would be cutting 550 good jobs, jobs that put food on the table and pay the bills every month for those families. Based on what we know, the McGuinty government's negotiations with the company failed miserably. As Hamilton's only voice at the cabinet table, what did the minister know about these negotiations and when did she know?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind that you need to refer that to the appropriate minister.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Can I answer the first part?

I want to thank the member for my first question in the House coming from a Hamiltonian. It's not a question for the Ministry of Consumer Services, so in my supplementary I will send it to the Acting Premier, but let me just say that, as a Hamiltonian, I was disappointed in Siemens going to North Carolina. Absolutely, I was disappointed. But you know what? I'm very optimistic. Hamilton is a great city with the best skilled workforce and we will definitely get more jobs to Hamilton.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: There must be an election coming.

Either the Minister of Consumer Affairs is representing Hamilton or she's not. It's important that she's on top of what her government is doing to protect jobs in our community. But it seems that the McGuinty government went into negotiations with Siemens without much of a

plan, and now 550 families are paying the price as \$26-an-hour jobs head to North Carolina. This is a serious Hamilton economic issue and the minister of Hamilton needs to account for her and her government's failure.

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How did the McGuinty government so badly bungle the Siemens negotiations?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: To the Acting Premier.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Hamilton is lucky to have that member standing up for their interests. What a contrast. You have a member who speaks to a brighter future and progress for Hamilton versus a voice of the old ways, the old days and no jobs.

We were extremely disappointed that we lost the competition on that particular project. But I'd remind that member that he voted against putting the money in the budget to be there in the negotiation in the first place. He has done nothing—nothing—to help his community through these difficult times. He has done nothing to help this province. That member and our members from Hamilton have stood up—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

INTERNET SECURITY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will please come—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: What a knight you are; a white knight.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East.

Please continue.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Children today spend a lot of time on the Internet. It is incredibly important—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: You're sickening.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will please watch the language that he uses within this chamber.

Please continue.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: As I was saying, my question is directed to the Minister of Education. Our children today spend a lot of time on the Internet, and it is incredibly important that they are protected from possible predators. While parents are the best people to teach and guide their children's online habits, teachers also play a vital role. Parents and teachers in my riding of York South-Weston and across the province understand the importance of working together to ensure that all our children are protected.

In the past, our government has dedicated resources to boards to educate our students about Internet safety, as well as for non-profit groups such as the Kids Internet Safety Alliance.

Minister, what is our government, and your ministry in particular, doing to protect children during their online activities?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: A very important question, because I think that the people of Ontario do want to understand how we are working in government to protect our young people. My ministry has been working very closely with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. We have committed to a number of initiatives. We have the CyberCops initiative. It is particular software for grade 7 and 8 students and it deals with the issues of cybertheft, extortion and Internet luring. We also have the KINSA initiative, which is the Kids Internet Safety Alliance. They have received \$500,000 to provide a DVD to parents for students to talk to them and educate them about Internet safety issues. Just in the past fall, we committed \$750,000 to the Ontario physical education association as they have put resources together—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Minister, there are many concerns with our children surfing online in ensuring that they are aware of the dangers posed by the Internet. The increasing importance of Internet safety resurfaced a couple of weeks ago after a province-wide OPP raid brought to light a child pornography ring. Shortly after this event, many media articles noted that Ontario's updated education curriculum would include an increased focus on Internet safety. This is great news for parents, as it will supplement the education that they provide to their children in their homes.

Minister, could you provide further information about the Internet safety updates to the curriculum?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: We have heard from parents—who are very concerned about ensuring that we protect their children—about these very serious matters. Because we have just recently reviewed the Ontario curriculum in our schools, we have addressed Internet safety in that we have revised all curriculum documents in all subjects, in all grades, from grades 1 to 12. A review of our physical and health education curriculum in grades 1 to 8 has recently been completed, and as a result of that, we have put Internet safety in that curriculum. We've also revised the grades 9 to 12 curriculum. In September 2010, this curriculum will be implemented—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

USE OF TASERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Two weeks ago, in your throne speech, policing stakeholders were very disappointed to learn that there was no mention of policing or community safety in the throne speech. Minister, do you agree that front-line police officers in Ontario should be trained and equipped with conductive energy weapons?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me say that I am very proud of our government's investments in policing across Ontario. I will compare our investments against the former government's investments at any time. I will compare our record of support for policing in the province of Ontario against their record any time. I will compare our record of investment with regard to police officers on the street against their record and their federal brothers' record at any time.

What I would ask of them is that they help us in convincing the federal government to make their police officer program a permanent one.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I guess you don't support it then. You didn't answer the question, so you obviously don't support it.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus believe that front-line officers should be trained and equipped with conductive energy weapons.

In the budget this week, your government will include \$25 million in severance packages for tax collectors who will have higher-paying jobs the very next day as HST tax collectors—certainly a very, very bad deal for Ontario taxpayers.

I don't have to remind you, Minister, that police officers are men and women who put their lives on the line each and every day of the week. Are you preparing to set aside funding in the budget to train and equip our front-line police officers with taser technology? A simple yes or no would do—a simple yes or no.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Just to clarify, the Tories put that clause in the agreement, just so that we all understand. All right. The Tories put it in. Let's make no mistake about that.

Listen, our government will continue to take a measured approach with regard to tasers. We brought our policing partners together. Very shortly, we'll be issuing those guidelines. It is a co-operative effort and a collaborative effort. We believe in partners in policing, not dictating to policing. That's what that government used to do. That's what that party still condones. We believe that it is very important to bring the partners to the table to make joint, shared decisions.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, I joined 5,000 women, men and children to support a fair deal for Vale Inco workers who have been on strike now for eight months. Vale Inco is making billions of dollars off of our natural resources and trying to squeeze more profits at the expense of Sudbury families. When will the McGuinty government get off the fence and stand in solidarity with Vale Inco workers and their families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the question. All of us here in this chamber and across

Ontario, but especially in the community of Sudbury, understand that this is a difficult and frustrating time.

We were pleased that, a few weeks ago, the parties did get together and have some talks. Now, those talks have been suspended. What I say to the parties is that they must roll up their sleeves and double their efforts. They need to put their differences aside. They have to come back to the table to resolve those differences. That is the only way we are going to get a stable, productive agreement to allow the community to move forward. This is where my efforts are; this is where the efforts of this government are. We are there to assist the parties, to help them come together—

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have to say that I didn't see a single frustrated person; I saw a hell of a lot of devastated people in Sudbury the other day.

The Premier and his cabinet, including the minister from Sudbury, have been silent as thousands of workers have been languishing on the picket line. They've also refused to support the NDP's proposal, which would ban replacement workers in this province, and that would force Vale Inco into ending this strike. How much longer are the workers and their families going to have to wait before this government does the right thing and supports a ban on scabs in Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member's rhetoric is what stops parties from coming together. It is Minister Bartolucci and the way that he acts in the community that brings the parties together, by working with them and understanding that the only way for us to move forward, for that community to move forward, is for all of them to put those differences aside, to get back to the table and to find where they have common ground. That's what we are doing at the Ministry of Labour by assisting with our mediation services. I do know they have a senior mediator who is working closely with the parties, but agreements reached at the bargaining table will be the ones that are stable, productive and the type of agreement that they need—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TOURISM

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. In the minister's response to a previous question I raised in the House, he stated that increased visitors are a must for Ontario and for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I agree. There is a clear need for increased visitors to Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. In achieving this goal, we can stimulate our local economy and support Ontario's overall economy.

Efficiency, marketing and coordination are vital to bringing more visitors, but so are direct investments into the community.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Tourism and Culture, what steps will the minister take to support increased investments to Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock so that we can attract more visitors year in and year out?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for the question. Without a doubt, tourism is an economic driver of Ontario. Celebrate Ontario is a program that touches local communities across the province. Festivals and events in Ontario play an important role in generating \$23 billion for our economy. In Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock alone, through Celebrate Ontario, we are investing close to \$140,000 in eight festivals this year. Since 2007, we have invested close to over \$400,000.

I know that the honourable member is a strong advocate for local tourism. We remain committed to supporting communities like his area. They are at the heart of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Such investments will make a significant difference. Festivals and events such as the Globus Theatre's summer season, Fiesta Buckhorn, 4th Line Theatre summer season in Millbrook, the CBCA national sheepdog championships and Wilberforce Agricultural Fair all play a vital role.

Providing such support will stimulate our local economy and help promote our communities. When we support these festivals and events, we strengthen their programs. It supports the community and the local organizers, and will increase visitors. Strengthening these festivals and events also provides more opportunities for growth and long-term sustainability with regard to funding.

To the minister: What are you doing to support these festivals and events so that they remain viable and attract more visitors to Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock now and well into the future?

Hon. Michael Chan: When we strengthen these festivals and events, they are certainly opportunities for growth. Our support does just that: It provides opportunities, and that's why we remain committed to supporting festivals and events.

Our commitment is clear: Since 2003, our government has invested more than \$140 million through more than 2,800 grants. This year's investment of almost \$12 million in Celebrate Ontario will support hundreds of festivals and events across the province.

Whether it's through Celebrate Ontario or the tourism event marketing partnership program, our support will continue. We know that supporting our festivals and events will help our communities and our economy moving forward.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, recently you

received and rejected a growth plan from the region of Durham. This plan was prepared after more than two years of consultation with citizens, experts and stakeholders within Durham. This plan has been endorsed by Durham region's council.

Minister, why do you think that politicians and bureaucrats at Queen's Park are better qualified to plan for Durham than their duly elected representatives locally?

Hon. James J. Bradley: You always have to start by saying, I want—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can't hear from the noise coming from the member from—where?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Lanark.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Lanark is interjecting because what he may be concerned about, the member for Lanark, is that when the gentleman behind him, my good friend Bill Murdoch, suggested the boundaries be changed—in other words, a separate Toronto and a separate rest of the province—he forgot to say that the government that did the most to hurt rural Ontario was the government that took away 27 seats from this Legislature. The impact of that on rural Ontario was so bad that the people of rural Ontario should not forget which government took away all of their power.

I was going to answer the question—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. John O'Toole: That answer is simply shameful.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Unacceptable.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's unacceptable when you're so evasive on such an important issue to Durham.

Minister, it's hard to believe that a government facing a \$25-billion deficit and a \$3-billion tax increase is in any position to give advice to elected representatives in Durham. But let's set aside your government's Big Brother tactics for a moment.

It's my understanding that Durham region's growth plan is projected to increase by 25,000 more jobs in Durham. Now, the issue is, Minister, that your government is rejecting Durham's growth plan because the McGuinty government wants to put those jobs somewhere else.

Minister, is it fair that your government picks winners and losers? Or do you think it's fair of the government to stifle Durham region's job plan and investment in Durham?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member should know that all of the consultation took place, first of all, when there was the development of the Places to Grow Act in the province of Ontario. That was to affect the greater Golden Horseshoe. All the plans that we look at across the province of Ontario, as they are submitted for consideration, take into account the Places to Grow document.

Instead of having the kind of urban sprawl that your government permitted, where you paved over all kinds of

farmland and paved over all kinds of environmentally sensitive areas, our government looked at all aspects of it and tried to ensure that—you were transportation critic, so you know how important it is to concentrate population instead of allowing that sprawl. Our government is ending that urban sprawl—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Health. Christopher Pelletier must travel 350 kilometres to see medical specialists in Thunder Bay and Winnipeg. Each trip to see a medical specialist is very expensive to him. He applies for and receives northern health travel grant assistance, but it takes more than 10 weeks for the northern health travel grant system to respond. In fact, it takes so long that, in the last six months, he has had to cancel four medical specialist appointments because the northern health travel grant system doesn't keep up with the cost of these trips.

My question is this: Does the minister think it is appropriate that residents of northern Ontario are forced to cancel medical specialist appointments because the northern health travel grant office doesn't keep up with the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. This is an issue that has not been brought to my attention before, and it is one that I will most definitely look into. If the member opposite would share the details with me, I would be more than happy to do it.

I think access to care for people who live across this province, in different parts of this magnificent province, is an issue that we really are starting to focus some attention on. We've got the northern and rural health panel that is very close to releasing its draft report that will then trigger broader consultations. We really do need to get this right. We have made tremendous advancements in health care, and we need to make sure that excellent health care is available to people across Ontario, regardless of where they live in this province.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Minister, you should have Mr. Pelletier's letter in your office. He sent it to your office on March 13. But he's not alone. There are literally dozens and dozens of families who are being forced to cancel medical specialist appointments in places like Thunder Bay or Winnipeg because when they call the northern health travel grant office, the office says, "No, we're not even going to deal with your application until after 10 weeks." This puts people in a very difficult position. In Mr. Pelletier's case, his physician has said, "You need to have surgery." But he can't afford to go to Winnipeg to have surgery because

he has three travel grants that haven't been paid, and he doesn't have the money.

I ask the question again: Do you think people in northern Ontario should have to sacrifice their health because the northern health travel grant office is so slow to respond?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, I do thank the member for bringing this to my attention. It is something that I suspect people in my office are already looking into. I will do my best to address the issue that he has raised with this particular constituent.

I think the member opposite does bring to light an issue that is one we do need to do some work on. In fact, we are focusing attention on that very issue. The northern health travel grant enhancements project is on track. Their goal is to reduce application processing times and further reduce the claims processing time. It is a challenge for us. We're working on it, and I will report back to the member as we make progress on this.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, broadband Internet access is viewed today as essential infrastructure for both our social and economic well-being. While urban residents have had access to powerful broadband connections for years, many residents in our remote and rural areas have not realized the same benefit. Given the importance of being connected in this day and age, access to broadband infrastructure should be available to as many Ontarians as possible, including our rural businesses and residents.

In my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, local municipalities are looking to attract new businesses. Services such as access to fast Internet connections are integral to companies deciding to locate in the area.

Could the minister inform this House about the steps our government has taken to ensure rural access to broadband infrastructure?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I do want to thank the member for the question. I want to be very succinct in my answer. There have been significant investments made by the McGuinty government in the information highway. Not only have we made significant investments in remote and rural communities on our actual highways, but we recognize that the information highway brings more industry and creates jobs. The investments have been significant: \$27 million for 47 broadband projects, including \$520,000 to the county of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry; \$849,000 to South Glengarry township; \$55 million to fund a regional broadband proposal from the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus; and \$32.75 million under the Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians program to support projects across rural and northern Ontario.

The McGuinty government gets it. We recognize that these investments in rural Ontario will remain—that Ontario rural communities are strong. We will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

PRESENTATION OF THRONE SPEECH

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Our fundamental abilities as elected members of this Legislature and opposition are guided by the very rules of this Legislature. Each and every member here is elected to represent the constituency that has given us the privilege and honour to best represent it. This representation is founded through our ability to stand in our place and vote on behalf of our constituents.

On December 16, 2004, the member from Oak Ridges stood on a point of order, and, as it relates to that point, I quote Speaker Curling's ruling where he specifically states, "whether the announcement goes further and reflects adversely on the parliamentary process," as stated on February 22, 2005.

A tradition was upheld during a previous throne speech when the then-minister from Leeds-Grenville stepped aside during a review of what I see as a similar statement.

To add to that, my point of order reflects on page 12 of the throne speech, where it specifically states, "It will introduce legislation to make health care providers and executives accountable for improving patient care."

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to rule if the parliamentary process has been circumvented as a result of the statement found on page 9 of the throne speech, where it specifically states, "That's why, starting this fall, full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds will begin at schools across our province." Bill 242, dealing with all-day kindergarten, is still before the Legislature.

The difficulty that we find here is that it appears to be a *fait accompli*—that the decision has been made for each and every one of us elected to vote on behalf of our constituents. Speaker, I would ask for your review.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member for his point of order. Bearing in mind that he has made references to previous rulings, and I do not have the luxury of having the throne speech and those specific pages that he made reference to, I will reserve judgment on that ruling.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On another point of order, Speaker: I rise on a point of order under standing order 23, specifically subsections (h) and (i). Today, during question period, the Acting Premier's replies to questions from the Leader of the Opposition alleged as to what the leader and the Ontario PC caucus would do if we formed the next government. It is somewhat ironic—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is somewhat ironic, given the Acting Premier said with one breath that we have no plan, but impugned in another our plans if we are elected. With all his sucking and blowing, he stepped outside the decorum of the House, alleging that we will cut health care and close hospitals. In point of fact, Tim Hudak, our

leader, is on record as saying that a PC government will make no cuts to health. Elsewhere, he has said—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Can you get to the point that you're trying to make?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Under those rules, he's making allegations against the Leader of the Opposition as to what he would do, should he be elected government. The Leader of the Opposition has said no such thing. That both imputes motives under subsection (i) and makes allegations against him under subsection (h). I believe that the Speaker should rule—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I endeavour as much as possible to listen very closely during question period. It is difficult at times with comments that are made, but I did not hear anything that was imputing any allegation directed against a member.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mr. Peter Kormos: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I didn't want to be left out, Speaker.

A point of order is not debate. One understands that in the cut and thrust of debate, there may be heckling and response—at times, loud and vociferous heckling and response. A point of order is a very valuable tool that every member of this assembly has. With respect, it seems to me that it is out of order for there to be the sort of heckling that we just witnessed. During the course of a point of order, whether it's successful or not, if any of us are going to enjoy that privilege of raising points of order, then we ought to respect other members' privilege and right to raise those same points of order.

I suggest to you, sir, that it was out of order for members to intervene during the course of a point of order. If they've got a point of order, stand up and raise one. Otherwise, sit down and listen.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I do thank the honourable member for his point. His point is very well taken, and I think it applies to much more than just during a point of order.

At times, I find that it's extremely difficult to hear in this chamber. In this chamber we have many guests who come and visit, and if the members would like, I would be very happy to share many of the e-mails that I do receive from what I like to call the armchair speakers, who are at home watching, and those individuals who have come to this chamber.

I would love to see more courtesy given at all times within this chamber, to be respectful of the points of view of members. I don't want to continue to rise during question period and interrupt the flow of the proceedings; I would like to see the question period flow. So I do thank the honourable member from Welland for his comment. I would just ask all members to be conscious of what he said. As much as possible, we do need to be courteous with one another, recognizing the fact, as in a

ruling that I've made previously, that it is the cut and thrust of this environment in which we work, but we all do need to have respect for one another's opinions. I thank the honourable members.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome to the Speaker's gallery a good friend of mine, Larry Sherk. For anybody who is interested in Canadian beer memorabilia, Larry is the premier collector of the Canadian brewing industry and the memorabilia associated with it. Welcome, Larry.

DEFERRED VOTES

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on a motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne. Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour of the motion will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Robert
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob

Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine

Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sorbara, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie

Hillier, Randy
Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Tabuns, Peter
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is therefore resolved that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like the members to join me in welcoming Chris Hodgson, who represented Victoria-Haliburton in the 35th and 36th Parliaments and Victoria-Haliburton-Brock in the 37th Parliament, in the east gallery. Welcome back to the Legislature, Chris.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL AUXILIARIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Mr. John O'Toole: The year 2010 marks the 100th anniversary of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario. These members volunteered over four million hours and raised \$50 million for their health care facilities last year.

The Association of Hospital Volunteers in Bowmanville marked the centennial on February 16 with a free coffee and/or tea at their kiosk at the hospital. Jill Haskins, director of resources for the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, is a long-time member of the Bowmanville Hospital Association. The Bowmanville president is Joanne Crookshank. I commend them for their volunteer work.

In Port Perry, the auxiliary hosted the recent Polar Plunge on January 9 as the auxiliary fundraiser for the year. Ruth Spearing is president of the auxiliary in Port Perry.

In Uxbridge, the community is looking forward to the Uxbridge half-marathon on April 25, which supports their auxiliary. The auxiliary president at Uxbridge Cottage Hospital is Mary Kerber.

Whether they are actively fundraising or working behind the scenes, hospital volunteers bring added comfort, hope and encouragement. Congratulations to all of the hospital auxiliary associations in Ontario on your centenary.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 60; the nays are 31.

I might add my disappointment. When I in 1984 asked one of the ministers of the Ontario government to extend a growing or extend some small grant to allow them to celebrate, that was denied. I commiserated those volunteers who make us tomorrow a better place for the children, or the patients, or their care.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tarnoff: The today is address the daycare issue that is troubling in the province.

Recently, I received a letter from the chair of the board of Hamilton Avenue Child Care in my riding, Sarah Johnson. Chair of organization that has a long history in the Queen-Elizabeth area and provides high-quality child-care to many children. She writes:

"The chair of the board of Hamilton Avenue Child Care and the parent of a child in daycare. I was really concerned to learn that thousands of child care subsidies and the funding of our entire child care system is at risk if the Ontario government does not fulfill funding for child care in its next budget. Child care subsidies could begin to drop in July. That has low-income parents, mothers, who can't look for work without affordable, secure child care for their children. Our daycare, Hamilton, has many wait parents, as it would affect not only parents but the entire daycare itself."

The child care issue must be addressed in the budget, not only the immediate funding issue but the potential elimination of daycare across from its historical responsibility of full-day kindergarten. Full-day kindergarten is an initiative that parents want. They want it done with a view to preventing upheaval during its implementation. I call on the government to listen to parents around the province and make sure that daycare is protected, not threatened.

HEALTH COMMISSION

Mr. Khalil Hamad: I would like to commend the efforts of the London South Council and the Southwestern Ontario Health Unit for their organization of Through a Thousand Eyes, a phone competition for youth aged 12 to 18.

This competition is unique in the fact that it is primarily organized and judged by youth. It also has important social messages that the youth council and the Southwestern Ontario Health Unit want to relay.

All communities must respond to a particular social issue whether it's about healthy living, community safety and awareness, or anything. With these messages, the idea of this youth-led phone contest is open participation from youth across the province and not only in the area of health but of social or broader issues. These competitions will hopefully be a yearly thing for youth and will help the youth voice their views.

It is my hope that the youth voice of others in our youth council and the Southwestern Ontario Health

Unit, to have those organizations, artistically and actively engaging all the youth in our community.

I want to congratulate them for their hard work and commitment in making a difference in the lives of youth in the London-Southwestern community.

EARTH HOUR

Mr. Tony Barrett: I stand to remind government members, as I have for the past three years to encourage home throughout Ontario to join this Saturday night Earth Hour. It's an international effort for energy reduction.

Earth Hour is now in its fourth year and calls on communities, provinces, cities and residents to take a very simple step. Turn on the lights this Saturday between 8:30 and 9:30. Last year, more than 4,000 cities in 47 countries were dark in Ontario, demand was reduced by more than 3%, that's 1.25 megawatts.

Why is a government prone to cost-cutting on environmental initiatives doing such a poor job of letting Ontarians know of government support for this worldwide initiative? Last year, all we got was a three-line news release on the Ministry of the Environment website. This year, check the website. There's not even that. There's no mention. We're now four days ahead of Earth Hour, and there's nothing on the website. I really wonder, what are people to think about this?

Perhaps government feels the loss of close to 300,000 manufacturing jobs under in which was contribution enough to our electricity use. Maybe the same electronic wastes that ended and then replaced reference to the 300-million electronic use can quickly post an Earth Hour message.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL 1447

Mr. Bill Mawer: In January of this year, I had the great pleasure of attending the 100th anniversary of the Knights of Columbus Council 1447, in my riding of Thunder Bay-Jukon. I want to congratulate the anniversary committee chair, Bill Voss, and its members for a great event.

Current officers of Port William Council 1447 include grand knight Jim Peterson, secretary grand knight Norm Kowalsky, chancellor Jim Baker, financial secretary Peter Johnson, recorder Romano Tullio, worship George Remont, treasurer Bill Voss, educator Wayne Manning, master Peter Koyner, Mike Pommitak and Roger Hammer, advisor Louis Remont, made grand master Robert, assistant grand Larry Joy and chaplain Father James Black and co-chaplain Father Ted Kennedy.

Some of my favorite events are with organizations that offer services across through volunteerism in their communities. They help each other together—they're the glue of our communities. They are, to a large degree, responsible for our social fabric.

Thunder Bay has a tremendous record of volunteerism, none greater than the Knights of Columbus 1447. They help us reach our potential as communities.

Many members have been noteworthy for their contributions, including Louis Salini, who held the positions of grand knight of Council 1447, district deputy, Ontario state warden, Ontario state deputy and vice supreme master in the fourth degree.

I congratulate Council 1447 on their 100th anniversary of volunteerism in our community, and I wish them many more years of charity, unity and fraternity.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm starting to hear concerns from more and more constituents about our local York region community care access centre. Seniors are being cut off home care, services they have received for years, in some cases. One woman has had her home care reduced from levels she has received for almost 20 years.

My constituents want to know, is the government underfunding the CCAC? Or is there a problem with the local agency?

1510

Home care helps seniors stay in their own homes, and I thought this was the centrepiece of something the government wanted to do as part of the aging-in-place strategy. This will not work if the government refuses to provide the funding needed. We know that the government underfunds health care in the 905. They admitted this in the throne speech when they announced a new funding system for health. I call on the Minister of Health to review spending and funding at the York region CCAC, and make sure my constituents have the home care services they deserve so they can stay in their own homes.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS DISTINCTIONS POUR SERVICES BÉNÉVOLES

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I recently had the pleasure of hosting a Celebration 2010 ceremony honouring 25 volunteers from my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Celebration 2010 is an award program developed by former Minister Jim Watson to honour our communities' sports and recreation volunteers. These are people who spend thousands of hours helping our beloved athletes achieve their goals. These awards turned the spotlight on them by giving them the recognition they deserve.

Dans une communauté nous comptons toujours plusieurs bénévoles dans le domaine des sports. Ce sont des gens qui donnent de leur temps et leur expertise afin d'aider et d'encourager nos athlètes à réaliser leurs rêves de pratiquer un sport qui les passionne. Célébration 2010 nous permet de reconnaître et d'honorer les héros méconnus de notre communauté dans le domaine sportif et récréatif.

Once again, many thanks to our volunteers for the work they are doing in developing Canada's future Olympic athletes.

ELMIRA MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: In my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, I've highlighted Kitchener Oktoberfest, I've highlighted the Wellesley apple butter festival, I've highlighted Wilmot NASCAR festival and today I have the pleasure of highlighting the Woolwich Elmira Maple Syrup Festival. Yes, this festival happens this Saturday, March 27, and it is the 46th annual Elmira Maple Syrup Festival. On February 26 we tapped the tree at George Martin's farm and Robert Richmond of the Ontario Maple Syrup Producers Association was there with us. We received great coverage by Gail Martin in the Elmira Independent. She covered the tapping, and she continues to cover the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival. A big thank you to Gail and all of her local coverage in the Elmira Independent.

I also want to thank Cheryl Peterson, who is the chair of this year's festival, all of her committee members and her many, many volunteers who make this a possibility and reality for our community. I also want to thank the Woolwich Observer and the editor, Steve Kannon, who continue their fantastic work of ongoing coverage of the maple syrup festival and of all of the local issues in Woolwich township; and great recent coverage by Katie Edmonds, who says, on the front of the Observer, that there are two things to remember when you come to the festival on Saturday: "Plan ahead, and be hungry!"

I invite everyone in Ontario to come to the 46th annual Elmira Maple Syrup Festival on Saturday.

TAXATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: Our government understands how important it is to stimulate business investment, create new jobs and help Ontarians keep their hard-earned money. This is why our government has modernized Ontario's tax system.

Unfortunately, the members of the opposition have put forward a great deal of myths and fictions about these reforms, ignoring some of the very important benefits these reforms hold for Ontarians. For example, our government has implemented the largest tax cut in Ontario's history. Starting this past January 1, we cut taxes for 93% of Ontarians and removed 90,000 low-income earners from the tax roll altogether.

What's more, experts believe that having a single sales tax will create almost 600,000 new jobs in our great province, and a harmonized sales tax was shown to stimulate business investment by 12% in the maritime provinces.

Poverty groups and business groups have both voiced their support for these tax reforms and economists on both the left and the right are supporting them as well. But of course, most of the Conservative members have

also voiced their support for the HST because they know that these are the right tax reforms at the right time for our province.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Brownell assumes ballot item number 14 and Mr. Kwinter assumes ballot item 66; and Mr. Barrett assumes ballot item number 10 and Mr. Yakabuski assumes ballot item number 16.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Wellington–Halton Hills gives notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Finance concerning transfer of staff from the Ontario Ministry of Revenue to the Canada Revenue Agency. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Durham has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning Durham region's growth plan. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DURHAM REGION CLASSIC MUSTANG CLUB ACT, 2010

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr30, An Act to revive the Durham Classic Mustang Club.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to thank Mr. Frank Fielding of Port Perry in Durham region for all of his hard work in reviving this bill and in fact reviving the Durham Region Classic Mustang Club.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

DEEPA GAS LIMITED ACT, 2010

Ms. Albanese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr31, An Act to revive Deepa Gas Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

WASTE DISPOSAL SITE 41 IN THE TOWNSHIP OF TINY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE LIEU 41 D'ÉLIMINATION DE DÉCHETS DANS LE CANTON DE TINY

Mr. Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at Site 41 in the Township of Tiny / Projet de loi 9, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets sur le lieu 41 dans le canton de Tiny.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

Ms. M. Aileen Carroll: You don't need it, Garfield.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This is a bill that keeps on giving, Aileen.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT AMENDMENT ACT (NOISE REMEDIATION), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DES VOIES PUBLIQUES ET DES TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN (RÉDUCTION DU BRUIT)

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to noise remediation / Projet de loi 10, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun en ce qui concerne la réduction du bruit.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. David Caplan: This bill amends the Public Transportation Highway Improvement Act to require that the Minister of Transportation assess noise levels on highways after construction, extension or alteration.

1520

In the case where the noise level exceeds the acceptable level as established by the ministry by five decibels or more, the minister is obliged to take all necessary steps to reduce noise to an acceptable level within three years. The bill also requires the minister to establish and publish standards for acceptable noise levels for the operation of highways.

Over the years, residents in my community have worked hard to remediate noise increases in Don Valley East that have resulted from road repairs and other work on Highways 401 and 404 and the Don Valley Parkway. All of these intersect at the heart of Don Valley East.

With this bill, I hope to complement their extensive work and lobbying and put an end to the frustration caused by noise levels on highways.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Introduction of bills? The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First of all, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce members of paramedics teams across Ontario from CUPE and OPSEU, and behind them the Police Association of Ontario and the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association as well, who helped with this bill. Thank you all, gentlemen and women.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (POST TRAUMATIC
STRESS DISORDER), 2010
LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(TROUBLE DE STRESS
POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post traumatic stress disorder / Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail relativement au trouble de stress post-traumatique.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This bill amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, to provide that a worker who sustains mental stress arising out of and in the course of his or her employment is entitled to benefits under the insurance plan. Post-traumatic stress disorder should be presumed as being caused by work for all front-line workers.

BRITISH HOME CHILD
DAY ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR
DES PETITS IMMIGRÉS BRITANNIQUES

Mr. Brownell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to proclaim British Home Child Day / Projet de loi 12, Loi proclamant le Jour des petits immigrants britanniques.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jim Brownell: This bill will proclaim September 28 of each year as British Home Child Day. It will set aside a day to recognize and honour the contributions made to the province of Ontario by the more than 100,000 British home children from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. They came to Canada and Ontario from homes for the orphaned and destitute to work as domestics and farm labourers in a new land with fresh air and green spaces. They left us wonderful legacies, and this bill will honour those individuals.

SUSTAINABLE WATER
AND WASTE WATER
SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT
AND MAINTENANCE ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LA VIABILITÉ
ET L'AMÉLIORATION DES RÉSEAUX
D'APPROVISIONNEMENT EN EAU
ET D'EAUX USÉES

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to sustain and encourage improvement in Ontario's water and waste water services and to establish the Ontario Water Board / Projet de loi 13, Loi visant à assurer la viabilité des services d'approvisionnement en eau et des services relatifs aux eaux usées de l'Ontario et à favoriser leur amélioration et créant la Commission des eaux de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. David Caplan: Clean, safe drinking water ensures Ontario is strong, healthy and prosperous. This bill evolves from Justice Dennis O'Connor's recommendations from the Walkerton inquiry and from the recommendations of the water strategy expert panel. The bill does a number of things. It ensures the public ownership of water and waste water systems, it promotes financial stability, it improves transparency in the provision of water and waste water services to the public, and it creates an independent economic regulator with the expertise and authority to administer this act. This act brings into broad daylight the often-hidden water and waste water services that we all use.

Well-maintained and well-functioning water and waste water systems underpin our very quality of life. This legislation will help Ontarians enjoy high standards of public water services for generations to come.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RENDEMENT SCOLAIRE

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I am excited to be here today to talk about our government's student success programs and how they have helped over 52,500 additional students achieve their high school diploma over the last five years.

Thanks to Ontario's hard-working educators using our innovative programs, we have seen a steady increase in the number of students graduating from high school. When the McGuinty government took office in 2003, only 68% of Ontario's students were graduating from high school. We made a commitment to raising the graduation rate, and we are doing so. I'm very pleased to announce today that the rate was 79% for the 2008-09 school year. This is a tremendous result. It represents an increase of 11 percentage points since 2003. This means that an additional 16,500 students graduated last year alone compared to 2003-04.

C'est un fait établi que les élèves n'étudient pas tous au même rythme et ne partagent pas tous les mêmes intérêts. Nous en sommes conscients et le comprenons bien.

That's why we are allowing students to explore different pathways and programs as they progress through their secondary education. All Ontario students deserve the high-quality learning opportunities that they need to reach graduation. We have launched programs like the specialist high skills majors program, dual credits and expanded co-op. They create a more engaging learning environment for students and better prepare them to pursue future opportunities beyond high school. They also allow students to customize their high school experience to match their strengths, interests and career goals.

We've also funded 1,900 additional secondary school teachers to help struggling students in every high school. In addition, we've added more teachers and provided more support to our elementary schools so every student establishes a solid foundation in reading, writing and math that they can build on going forward.

All of this is contributing to our ultimate goal. More students today are succeeding and earning their diplomas.

Rising graduation rates and higher test scores are a testament to the hard work of our educators. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all educators and all of the staff in Ontario schools and our school boards. Thank you for your passion, commitment and hard work.

Applause.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: They do a great job. They deserve that.

Our government knows that the positive results that have been happening in our schools across this province would not be possible without them, so we want to thank

them for enriching the lives of our future generation with the work that they do so well every day.

Education is the foundation of economic success, and that's why higher graduation rates are part of the province's new Open Ontario plan, which is about creating jobs and opportunities for more Ontarians and building a well-educated workforce. The future prosperity of Ontario depends on the strength of our students. With more than 715,000 high school students in Ontario in almost 900 schools, it is imperative that we provide all students with more learning opportunities to help them graduate, to help them reach their future aspirations and become well-equipped to take on life's challenges. Together, we will make Ontario a classroom for the world.

1530

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to advise members that this is the 15th annual Meet the Miners Day at Queen's Park. Meet the Miners is a prime opportunity to bring together representatives of the mining industry and government to reaffirm the importance of dialogue and to foster mutual understanding.

We are hosting a delegation from the Ontario Mining Association, including President Chris Hodgson and the chair of the board, George Flumerfelt. The OMA is conducting several activities in our legislative buildings today, including a meeting of its board of directors. As co-host of Meet the Miners Day, I look forward to seeing all our legislative colleagues at this evening's social, which takes place in the legislative dining room from 5:30 to 7 p.m. tonight.

Let me also take this opportunity to update the members of the Legislature about Ontario's mineral development industry as well as our ministry's initiative to modernize the Mining Act. One thing we know for sure is that mining is a major force in Ontario's economy. Since 2003, Ontario has been Canada's leading jurisdiction for mineral exploration and active mining claims have reached record levels.

For several years, Ontario has been among the top 10 jurisdictions globally in terms of exploration expenditures, and Ontario's share of Canada's expenditures is forecast to be 28% in 2010. We cannot lose sight of the fact that mining in Ontario is a multi-billion-dollar-a-year business. Yes, indeed, there's no doubt the global economic downturn created huge challenges, but signs of recovery are clearly evident.

Let me give you some examples.

We are very excited about the fact that two new gold mines opened in Ontario last year. That's certainly good news for jobs and for economic development.

We also joined a very select group this last year, that of diamond producer. Thanks to this government's involvement with the project, we have ensured the creation

of value-added diamond jobs in Ontario through the province's first cutting and polishing facility.

We also helped to establish Canada's first diamond bourse, which was another great achievement.

We've all been hearing a great deal about the Ring of Fire. We are very excited about that. It is part of our government's Open Ontario plan, and this opportunity will help us to build a stronger economy and create jobs. The Ring of Fire is one of Ontario's most promising development opportunities in about a century and is North America's only world-class chromite deposit discovery. It's important that we do this right, we manage it well and we make sure that all the proper things are put in place, but we could not help but be very excited about this, and it's wonderful that it's part of the Open Ontario plan.

Those are just a couple of the success stories. We could go on even more. The important thing to note is that Ontario is continuing to work with the mineral sector to ensure that mining remains prosperous, which in turn strengthens our provincial economy.

As you know, my ministry has taken bold steps to modernize Ontario's Mining Act. During the last 18 months, we have worked with a wide variety of people and organizations to develop amendments to the act, and those efforts continue as we focus on development of the regulations. We are currently conducting a new phase of consultations to help us develop regulations and policies for this innovative new piece of legislation. To accomplish this, we have produced a workbook to help focus those discussions. Consultations centred on a workbook were launched earlier this year, and they will continue until June.

Again, in terms of our representatives who are here today, we are very grateful for their involvement in these discussions on the regulations. Sessions are being held to gather feedback from aboriginal communities, industry representatives and stakeholders, as well as other non-governmental organizations. May I also say that interested members of the public are encouraged to provide their comments through the Environmental Registry or the EBR until April 30.

Certainly, my ministry continues to work very hard to secure Ontario's place as a premier investment destination for mineral development.

In conclusion, once again, a warm welcome to all the industry leaders at Queen's Park, including those who are here in the visitors' gallery. I look forward to speaking with many of them throughout the day. I again welcome you all to the reception this evening at 5:30 in the legislative dining room.

Mining is a great economic force in our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to respond to the minister's

statement today regarding the high school graduation rate in the province of Ontario.

I think I need to begin, as a former high school teacher and Minister of Education, in congratulating our students for the hard work they have undertaken in order to achieve success. We applaud them.

Secondly, I want to also recognize the teachers. I do believe the job of a teacher has become more difficult over the years since I was in the classroom. Certainly, these students were helped in achieving success by the outstanding teachers, principals, volunteers, and also parents who supported them. I don't think we can ever forget the role of the parent in supporting their child. So we congratulate those people as well.

We know that students at risk are a group of young people that we've had to pay particular attention to in recent years. They're the ones who really need the additional programming, the additional support in order to help them achieve their full potential. Research has always told us that if we can identify these students early and put in the appropriate supports and provide the remediation, then they will achieve success.

Past governments—Bill Davis was one of the Premiers in this province who did all he could for children, and all the other governments as well—have always worked hard to recognize the unique needs of students to help them. When I was minister we focused on the learning opportunities grant to help students. We provided them with remedial reading, literacy, math, summer school. We recognized that you've got to do more in order to help those students and support them to achieve the best that they can be.

I'm glad that students are achieving success and I hope that the government will continue to work with them to support those young people. I hope that we will always keep in mind that parents want a curriculum that is challenging and specific, and that we need to help students be the best that they can be.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Hillier: On behalf of the PC caucus, I want to welcome the miners here today and the Ontario Mining Association and congratulate them on Meet the Miners Day.

I think it's also important that a government speak clearly and honestly to its citizens and stakeholders. Today the mining association is here, and I think it's crucial that the minister come forward and explain the contradictory statements about mining.

During the throne speech we heard that the Ring of Fire was going to add tremendous wealth and prosperity to the north. But then the minister went up north and told people not to get too excited. So what is it? Should people be excited or should they not be excited about this Ring of Fire?

The Premier and the minister have said that the Ring of Fire is going to be key to their five-year plan, but then ministry staff have said the Ring of Fire will not be

operational for at least five, maybe 10, years. That's what they said in the media two weeks ago. So which is it? Is the Ring of Fire key or is it not part of the plan at all?

The Premier and the minister have said the Ring of Fire is going to be a huge part of the economy. But then, at the same time, before this House, we have Bill 191, which will cut off all development to a quarter-million square kilometres of land in northern Ontario above the 51st parallel. There is no way of knowing how many Rings of Fire will never be found under Bill 191. There is no way of knowing what resources and wealth are up there. We don't know how many are going to be frittered away. So what is it, Minister? Will we develop or will we squander? Will we have prosperity or poverty? Part of the plan or no plan at all? Raising expectations or telling people the truth?

I'm not going to ask the minister to explain all these contradictions because I know he can't, but I will ask for one simple commitment to the miners who are here today. Minister, will you commit to the OMA and to the people of northern Ontario that no mineral development will be hindered or stopped by Bill 191? Let's be clear and honest with all the miners and the people of the north: Is northern Ontario open or is it closed?

1540

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On behalf of the New Democratic caucus, I want to welcome those from the mining industry who have travelled from afar—from all the way up in Attawapiskat to mines down in the Windsor area—here to Queen's Park today.

Let's understand that mining is important not just to northern Ontario, but to all of this province when it comes to the wealth that it generates. It's not just about the ore that's taken out of the ground, but it's about all of the activities that happen thereafter when it comes to adding value to those products that are sold not just as commodities but as finished products across the world—and the service industry that services the mining industry primarily in northern Ontario is here in the south. So when we have a strong mining industry that's doing well, it is not just good for northern Ontario, but it's good for all of this province.

I want to say up front that I take great exception to what this government is doing around mining. We have changed the Mining Act, and we're now about to do what's called the Far North planning act. Is it any easier today for De Beers, for whoever the mining company might be, to get access to the land to be able to determine if there is a mine there, which is a very expensive process? And number two, if you do find something, what are the rules of engagement when it comes to bringing that particular mining property into production? Are we any closer today to dealing with the issues of revenue-sharing and the issue of land use planning for First Nations? I say no. We missed a golden opportunity with changes to the Mining Act that could have given some certainty to the mining industry.

I say here publicly that I don't believe it's the job of the mining companies to do what the government should be doing when it comes to dealing with what the rules of engagement are regarding how you deal with First Nations and making sure that they're made whole when it comes to the opportunity for employment and the opportunity for investment on their parts and the ability to participate economically in those projects. I think the government has to show leadership, and quite frankly, I believe we've missed the boat on this one and we're still no further.

Ring of Fire: great idea. We know there's lots of potential up in that part of the province. But are we actually going to be able to bring those projects on stream? If I speak to Chief Elijah Moonias or to any of the First Nations, they want mining to happen in those communities in that area. But we still don't have the rules by which it's going to happen, and unfortunately, if we don't have the rules it makes it much more difficult for the mining sector to go in and do what it has to do. Much of the money that we would like to see in exploration is not being spent here but is being spent in Quebec and other places.

So I say on behalf of the New Democratic caucus, there's lots of work yet to be done in mining. If I had more time, I'd talk about Xstrata and Vale Inco, but that'll be for another debate.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In response to the Minister of Education's declarations about graduation rates, I can only say that the Liberals are fixated with one thing. They are obsessed with numbers, even when these numbers do not demonstrate real learning or the acquisition of relevant skill sets on the part of students.

It is very troubling that OSSTF still finds it necessary to differentiate real from artificial success. Teachers all over the province are finding themselves pressured to improve the government's statistical performance by reducing the number of failing grades, whether student achievement warrants it or not.

It is discouraging that the OSSTF work group on credit integrity finds it necessary to demand, "All marks, grades, and credits shall be true and accurate indicators of student achievement." Shouldn't this be a given? Why does OSSTF have to put into writing, "The subject teacher shall have the right and responsibility to give a failing grade, including zero, to a student when warranted"? If we have to formally say, "The subject teacher shall be consulted when school administrators are considering a mark change for a student," then we have a problem.

Who decided that late assignments and absenteeism could not be considered when measuring student success, and what world do they live in?

When Ontario secondary students hand in assignments late, miss tests or plagiarize assignments, teachers are not permitted to let it affect the grade. This McGuinty gov-

ernment policy has growing numbers of parents, teachers, university professors and employers questioning the integrity of the education system.

The government should move to maintain confidence in the system and promote a sense of responsibility in our students by allowing teachers to establish and enforce reasonable deadlines and performance expectations for our students.

PETITIONS

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I have a petition here from several hundred people in the region of Waterloo who are opposed to light rail transit. It reads as follows:

"Whereas we, the undersigned, are supportive of improvements to the public transit system in Waterloo region, we are opposed to regional council's plan for light rail transit for reasons including cost, appropriateness and feasibility;

"We, the undersigned residents of Waterloo region, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"We hereby request that the Parliament of Ontario provide provincial funding to the region of Waterloo for improved bus transit only."

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from First Nations youth in Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the health of the First Nations youth in Ontario is of growing concern;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To continue the partnership with the Right To Play partnership with the Moose Cree First Nation;

"To expand the Right To Play program to other First Nations communities; and

"To follow up these programs to ensure that other initiatives continue to promote the health of First Nations youth."

I agree with this petition and will sign it and give it to page Erin.

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

"Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

"Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational requirements and is well known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas early childhood learning is a fundamental program in the development and education of Ontario's youth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to expand full-day learning across the province;

"To continue to make our children a priority for this government;

"To continue investments in the infrastructure of our education system;

"To continue to support Ontario's families through these initiatives; and

"To never go back to the days of forgotten children and mismanagement of schools we saw in the 1990s. We applaud the new investments in full-day learning and look forward to continued growth across the province."

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: It's an honour to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. This is quite an interesting one; it's new: "Stop the Extra 8% Tax on Gasoline." It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's harmonized sales tax (HST) will increase the cost of gasoline at the pumps by 8% on July 1"—that means it will be \$1.08 a litre; and

"Whereas Ontario families are still hoping to recover from the worst recession in recent memory and gasoline remains a necessity for essential travel in business,

commerce, employment, education, travel, health care and more; and

"Whereas gasoline is already taxed by the province of Ontario at 14.7 cents per litre and the HST would add an estimated \$1.7 billion" in windfall gas profits from diesel and gasoline alone; and

"Whereas if your family spends \$100 a week on gasoline, this will add \$8 per week, or \$400 a year," just for gas; and

"Whereas Canada's provinces and territories have the power to regulate gasoline prices;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario legislature to ease the burden of the HST by reducing the existing provincial gas tax by an amount equal to the Ontario share of the HST on gasoline and diesel."

I present this and sign it and hand it to Torin, one of the new pages here at Queen's Park.

1550

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Dave Levac: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas early childhood learning is a fundamental program in the development and education of Ontario's youth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to expand full-day learning across the province;

"To continue to make our children a priority for this government;

"To continue investments in the infrastructure of our education system;

"To continue to support Ontario's families through these initiatives; and

"To never go back to the days of forgotten children and mismanagement of schools we saw in the 1990s. We applaud the new investments in full-day learning and look forward to continued growth across the province."

POWER PLANT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario, through the Ontario Energy Board, has selected a location for a gas-fired electrical generating power station within three kilometres of 16 schools and more than 11,000 homes; and

"Whereas the Milton-Clarkson airshed is already one of the most polluted in Canada; and

"Whereas no independent environmental assessment has been completed for this proposed building location; and

"Whereas Ontario has experienced a significant reduction in demand for electrical power; and

"Whereas a recent accident at a power plant in Connecticut demonstrated the dangers that nearby residents face;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to immediately rescind the existing plan to build a power plant at or near the current planned location ... on Royal Windsor Drive in Oakville and initiate a complete review of area power needs and potential building sites, including environmental assessments and a realistic assessment of required danger zone buffer areas."

I'm pleased to sign this petition, as I agree with it, and pass it to my page, Jameson.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas we currently have no psychiatric emergency service at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to support the creation of a psychiatric emergency service in emergency at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario."

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition sent to me from the Ontario Real Estate Association, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario's history; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: arena ice, soccer and baseball field rentals ... gas at the pumps ... home heating oil and electricity; gym fees; golf green fees; ski lift tickets; movie, theatre and event admission fees; Internet services; cellphone bills; boat rentals, fishing licences, charters and wood for the campfire; home renovations; and real estate transactions;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I affix my name in support.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is a unique opportunity to develop the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario and the Legislative

Assembly [should] ensure us that this valuable resource is used to advantage all Ontarians while respecting the environment and rights of the First Nations people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To develop the natural resources in the Ring of Fire for economic benefit for Ontario;

"To ensure that the development of the Ring of Fire does so only within the guidelines of an EPA report;

"To respect the rights of the First Nations people and communities; and

"To work with local industry to bring employment to northern Ontario communities."

I support this, and I will send it down with page Neale.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe-Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes ... for Ontario consumers."

I agree with the petition, and I will sign it.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas several paramedics in Simcoe county had their pensions affected when paramedic services were transferred to the county of Simcoe, as their pensions were not transferred with them from" hospitals of Ontario pension plan and OPSEU trust "to OMERS, meaning they will receive significantly reduced pensions because their transfer did not recognize their years of continuous service; and

"Whereas when these paramedics started with their new employer, the county of Simcoe, their past pensionable years were not recognized because of existing pension legislation; and

"Whereas the government's own Expert Commission on Pensions has recommended that government move swiftly to address this issue; and

"Whereas the government should recognize this issue as a technicality and not penalize hard-working paramedics;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" as follows:

That Premier McGuinty "support Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's resolution that calls upon the government to address this issue immediately and ensure that any legislation or regulation allows paramedics in Simcoe county who were affected by the divestment of paramedic services in the 1990s and beyond to transfer their pensions" from hospitals of Ontario pension plan and OPSEU trust to OMERS.

I'm happy to say that there is a bill before the House in which the government does address this issue. I agree with the petition, and I will sign it.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have another petition here on the same issue as my previous one. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is a unique opportunity to develop the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario and the Legislative Assembly [should] ensure us that this valuable resource is used to advantage all Ontarians while respecting the environment and rights of the First Nations people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To develop the natural resources in the Ring of Fire for economic benefit for Ontario;

"To ensure that the development of the Ring of Fire does so only within the guidelines of an EPA report;

"To respect the rights of the First Nations people and communities; and

"To work with local industry to bring employment to northern Ontario communities."

I will sign this petition and send it down with page Anthony.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010

SUR LES PROFESSIONS COMPTABLES

Mr. Bentley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to repeal and replace the statutes governing The Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario, the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario and The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario / Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à abroger et à remplacer les lois régissant l'Association des

comptables généraux accrédités de l'Ontario, les Comptables en management accrédités de l'Ontario et l'Institut des comptables agréés de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Willowdale. I just want to say at the very outset that I have been extremely privileged to be able to share the responsibilities of the Ministry of the Attorney General with my colleague from Willowdale, David Zimmer.

He has worked enormously hard. He has filled that role for much longer than I've been filling this role. It is extremely important to have somebody with knowledge, insight and a great work ethic, and a fabulous listener who is able to deal with the many and varied issues that are part of the responsibilities of this ministry, able to deal with the very tricky issues, most of which never find the public discourse, most of which never get into public debate, particularly in this House. I really am, as I say, quite privileged and very pleased to be working with my colleague from Willowdale.

1600

This piece of legislation is one that will modernize the acts governing accounting within the province of Ontario. I want to recognize at the outset the representatives from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, the Certified General Accountants of Ontario and the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, who are present in the gallery witnessing the debate here. I can say at the outset that this proposed legislation has support from all three bodies. In fact, they have been pushing for a modernization of the legislation governing accounting within the province of Ontario for some period of time.

Before I get into the details of what this act particularly deals with, I think it is important to recognize that accounting is a self-regulated profession within the province of Ontario. It is extremely important, when a Legislature debates and proposes and considers acts governing accounting, that the self-regulated profession itself is leading the charge for renewal and for reform. As I will expand upon in a few moments, that fact can give the public great confidence that we are moving in the right direction.

Members of the public might be watching and wondering, "What are you talking about, 'a self-regulated profession'?" Within the province of Ontario, there are over 30 self-regulated professions. I am a member of one: the legal profession. What we essentially have done historically in the province of Ontario is to ensure that some professions, like accounting, law and engineering, have additional expertise supplied to their management, regulation, disciplinary issues, professional standards—additional expertise in the form of those who are actually experts in the field. We can't all be experts on everything within the Legislature, and we don't expect necessarily that the great public service that we have, the finest in the world, within the province of Ontario can be experts in everything everywhere. So we have created these self-regulatory bodies to govern certain professions. It means

in the case of accounting that when it comes to professional standards, we get the accountants' input, not simply the input of those such as ourselves who are legislators or those in the public service who support the great work of government. It means that in cases of discipline we get the special expertise of those who are part of the profession and not simply those of us who legislate or support, through the public service, the work of the Legislature, and so on it goes.

What we heard from our colleagues in the accounting profession was that the acts governing accounting within the province of Ontario needed to be renewed and refreshed. They needed to reflect the modern-day reality, which is the economy of Ontario, the economy of the world. Accounting is an enormously important part of the economy of this province, and this province's economy is part of the world economy. We trade with countries all over the world. The companies doing business in the province of Ontario invariably trade with companies not only in the States, Europe, India, China—all over the world. Indeed, we have representatives going back and forth across borders every minute of every day.

It's essential, when you're making contractual relationships all over the world, that those making the relationships can rely on the fact that there is a firm financial foundation to the ones they're contracting with, and that that firm financial foundation is supported in good measure by the work of the accounting profession.

It's also essential in modern-day society that individuals in our own business have access to professionals who can assist us with our personal, our families' and our related financial dealings.

For all the efforts of Legislatures here and everywhere else throughout Canada, the tax laws are very complex. They can stymie the best-intended readers. People with busy lives who are confronted with taxation issues, whether they're at that time of year when we all file our taxes; whether they're with the disposition of certain property and whether you have to pay tax on that disposition; whether they're at the very sad times of the passing of a family member or loved one; or whether they're in the acquisition of property for something other than your matrimonial home—you need expert advice to make sure that you pay all the taxes you should but you don't pay the taxes you shouldn't. We all have the right to make sure that we pay the right taxes. Again, we rely on our good friends in the accounting profession to give us that excellent expert advice.

Within companies, you have people who can provide the nuts-and-bolts advice, but within companies and in all three parts of the profession you have those with an accounting background, accounting expertise, who can speak to not only the numbers issues within a company but how to make the company more profitable, how to engage in business more profitably and how to structure transactions so that they increase and improve economic activity.

So much of what the accounting profession does is unseen by the people of the province of Ontario, but it is

enormously important to the economic health and safety of the people in the province of Ontario—enormously important. It really touches us every minute of every day in what we do in our lives. So I want to say a special thank you and salute to those who are in all of the branches of the accounting profession, to those who have dedicated their lives to their profession, and thank them for the work that they've done in making sure that we have a piece of legislation, which will be debated in this House, that really has at its heart the updating of that legislation.

Why do we need to update it? At the moment we have one public act and two private acts, and some of them haven't been updated in quite some number of years. If you think—

Interjection: How long has it been?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Many years. It's an excellent question my friend asked. Many years.

It's appropriate that the legislation be flexible enough to meet the needs of the time, strong enough to support the weight of the issues of the time, and that that legislation be specific enough and directed to the issues that might arise in our time. We are, after all, well into the 21st century, so legislation that might have been appropriate in another century needs to be refreshed, needs to be updated and does need to be improved.

Some of the issues that are addressed in this bill before the House—and I'm really looking forward to listening to the debate from all sides of the House—include the following.

First of all, when you have a self-regulated body, it not only simply licenses people when they graduate school and finish their time with businesses and are ready to enter the profession, but that self-regulated body is there to make sure that the members of the association, once they're members, continue to uphold and maintain the standards which are at the heart of a self-regulated profession.

The self-regulated bodies must make sure that members continually update themselves, ensure they're aware of the rules and improve their skills. When those members fall below a standard—maybe it's sickness, maybe it's some other reason, but they can't perform to the same high degree—that body, the self-regulated body, has not only the legislated duty but the responsibility to take action, because it's ultimately the self-regulated profession that protects the public. At the beginning of the day and at the end of the day, they act not directly in the interest of their members, they act in the interest of the public. So what we're really doing here is strengthening the protections that the public need and they expect and, if they weren't there, they would demand. That's really what we're doing by amending, refreshing, renewing this approach to public accounting.

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These provisions will strengthen the ability of each of these bodies to remove members who, for whatever reason, are not able to perform to the high standards that

are required by the demands of accounting in modern-day society.

I want to just inject that we consulted quite extensively on this, not simply with the accounting profession itself; we heard from others. I know the debate will elicit further comment. I'm looking forward to that. We heard from a number of others about this bill.

One of the other aspects of the bill that we want to make sure is addressed through legislation is to specifically spell out and to be clear about the power of the different bodies to admit members, to expel members and, yes, to discipline members. The discipline doesn't have to be expulsion. The discipline can be suspension of all or some privileges. The discipline could take other forms. In other types of professional bodies, it can take many different forms, such as requiring some remedial work, and the measures that are taken by the self-regulated body can be for some egregious conduct or for something as simple as not filing your material. If you don't make a filing on time, a reporting to the governing body, then the governing body has a right to be concerned that maybe, if you're not doing that, you might not be doing something else you should be doing. It's an early flag that there is something that might be amiss and needs to be addressed by the governing body.

So what this legislation will do is ensure that the self-regulated bodies have the ability to oversee in the way that the public would expect. Now, you say, how can a body that has an office resident somewhere in the province of Ontario—we'd actually encourage them all to have head offices in the city of London, speaking personally—

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I would say Sudbury.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: And my colleague would say Sudbury and my parliamentary assistant might well say Willowdale, but wherever it is within the province of Ontario—a little salute to my colleagues from the professions in the gallery. Wherever it is within the province of Ontario, if they're in their offices, how do they actually know, what's the check on whether a member of one of their branches is actually doing what they should be doing in that member's offices, which are somewhere else? There is a very important power that the self-regulated profession has. It's an enormously important power. It's the power to inspect. It's the power to access the records of, yes, a private business that is a member of the profession, to take a good look, to pass a professional eye over the books and records to make sure that those books and records are not only being kept up to date, not only being kept appropriately, but actually reflect the high standards that should be undertaken and must be undertaken, and in Ontario, we're delighted, are undertaken by our accounting profession.

I simply want to say that we have an accounting profession within the province of Ontario that takes a backseat to nobody. It is as good as any in the world. That's important, because when the world looks to Ontario, they can rely on the highest standards of accounting at all levels within the province of Ontario. I

say thanks to those who are the self-regulators here for the efforts that they've taken on so many levels to make sure that that is the case. That is enormously important.

This power to inspect, power to review, power to discipline individual members' or groups of members' practices is extremely important. It's the engine that can drive compliance. It's really the guts and the heart of the regulation that a profession has over its constituent members.

You can tell by my enthusiasm here that this is important stuff. I like the engine room. I like the rooms that make things go. I love systems. Systems make it work. They're not the banner stuff. It's not the glitz. These are systems, these are the engines of the economy of the province, and these self-regulated professions are at the heart of public protection because—you know what?—hard-working women and men out there, families, don't have time to look at this. They don't have time to make sure the protections are there. They don't know, when they meet somebody, what standard they're achieving. Their confidence within the province of Ontario is in the designation. Their confidence is given by the fact that we have a self-regulated body that answers those questions for members of the public who want them answered but can't.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You can't shatter that trust.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Absolutely. As my colleague from Peterborough says, you cannot shatter that trust. You must build it. You must add to it, support it and applaud it.

This updated act that we're proposing and debating is going to make sure that the self-regulated profession and its different branches have the ability to go in and inspect. You say, "What happens when they inspect?" I say that at least two things happen. One, they have to be able to keep their findings confidential. They are the self-regulated profession. This material can't be spread all over the place. It would do undue damage to individual members and their practices if material just went out. There has to be a trust relationship that is at the heart of the power to inspect, but the second part of it is that the bodies need to be able to take action. The fact is that in the different pieces of legislation, we had penalties. You don't like to speak about penalties, but sometimes it's necessary. We had enforcement mechanisms that might have been good for their time, but their time was many years ago. A \$300 fine for a practice that may be generating many, many thousands of dollars in fees from members of the public is not very much. We need to have penalties, enforcement where it's necessary—only where it's necessary—which is consistent with the issues at play and which is significant enough to provide the necessary specific and general deterrent to those who might think—not that anyone would, but if anybody might think that shortcuts are okay, because our accounting profession in the province of Ontario has always said that shortcuts are not okay.

We need to give them the tools to use in their good judgment—it's not mine; it's not my colleagues'—in the

circumstances where they consider that the standards they are there to uphold are not being achieved. The enforcement must be robust enough to give some teeth to the mechanisms with which they are supporting and enhancing the public interest here.

That's another part of this particular piece of legislation, a part that won't be used very often because we have very high standards here, a part that we'd love never to have to be used, but if it has to be, it has to be robust enough that it has some teeth. There will be fines now of up to \$10,000, which is going to get some attention wherever that's needed. We don't think it will be needed very often, but if it is needed, it'll be there.

1620

There were, in the course of these discussions, in the course of developing this legislation and as we introduced it at first reading, and now we're here for second reading debate of course, some questions raised about members of accounting bodies certified elsewhere, outside the province of Ontario, outside Canada, and whether they would be able to come to Ontario for conferences, for example, and use their designations, which aren't recognized here in the province of Ontario, when they were attending, for example, conferences.

I want to say that we've listened very extensively to those who have suggested some amendments or suggested some changes. We've listened very extensively, but I want to be clear to the members of the public: Your protection is number one. Public protection is number one. Public protection is at the heart of the self-regulated profession, and we will not, as a government, support an approach which takes away from the protections we have long recognized, supported and expected within the province of Ontario, protections which are inherent in our self-regulated approach and our self-regulated accounting profession.

But given that, we have listened, and we're aware that some foreign designations are the same as or close to those used by Ontario bodies. We're going to introduce, at the appropriate time—if this bill passes second reading and goes to committee, we're prepared to introduce in committee amendments that would relax the current prohibition on the use of a foreign designation while continuing to protect clients of Ontario accountants from confusion about the qualifications or oversight of their professional advisers. As I say, this is something that really arises in the context, for example, of those practising accounting elsewhere who have designations that look similar, but aren't recognized within the province of Ontario through our self-regulated approach. Can they continue to come to, for example, a conference and use the designation in the program or something? We're prepared to work on and introduce those amendments should this bill get past second reading and go to committee. We're happy to speak to that at that particular time.

I think it is a great privilege, as I say, to be able to be part of an approach, part of a government that looks at these issues, which won't be top of mind for a lot, but

really are essential, and participate in the second reading debate about updating the profession of accounting, a profession which I have said that I have enormous respect for and enormous admiration for. They practise all over the province of Ontario: Sudbury, Peterborough, Willowdale and my community of London—great members of all branches of the accounting profession.

As I wrap up my comments, I really want to thank the members, the accounting profession within the province of Ontario and those who work so hard on self-regulation to protect the public and ensure that we continue to have the highest standards of accounting in the province of Ontario to be found anywhere in the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. The member from Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm very pleased to speak to this legislation in this debate.

What I'm going to do is make some introductory remarks for a few minutes, then I'd like to walk through some of the specific detail of the legislation because, of course, that's where a lot of the issues crop up. Third, I'd like to run through a number of questions and answers that I've been getting and other members, I expect, from all sides of this House have been getting about some of the details of the legislation, and then I have a few concluding remarks.

I should say that after I was first elected to the Legislature in October 2003, a few weeks later I became the parliamentary assistant in the Attorney General's office and I think it was the very next day or perhaps two days later that I had my first encounter with the issues represented in this legislation. I can say that those first two or three weeks, as I was adjusting to my new life here in the Legislature, the very first group of stakeholders that I came into contact with was the accounting profession, broadly speaking. I know in that first few weeks they were some of the very—in fact, they were the very first stakeholder meetings that I had. I met with the Institute of Chartered Accountants, I met with the certified management accountants, and I met with the certified general accountants.

My reaction to that first meeting—and I come from a legal background and I had sort of a general appreciation of the accounting profession but I was not acquainted in any particularity with the issues that each of those branches of the accounting profession were facing. I have to congratulate and thank each of those accounting professions—and there are representatives of the three branches of the profession here in the Legislature today; they're following the debate closely. Each of them—the chartered accountants, the certified managed accountants, the certified general accountants—all in a very professional way, laid out a host of issues that their profession specifically and the broader profession generally were facing.

I spent a lot of time those first couple of weeks, first couple of months, just listening, getting to familiarize myself with the issues and, just as importantly, getting to familiarize myself with the various personalities in the

accounting profession who were speaking to those issues. I have to congratulate each of those branches of the accounting profession for the professionalism with which they raised these very sensitive issues with me in my capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General.

It quickly became clear that the three branches of the profession saw that at this point in time—that was late 2003, early 2004—they wanted to modernize the governance aspects of the profession and the issue was really how had to proceed. Historically, the three branches of the profession—ICA, CGA, CMA—had their own, if I can use this expression, piece of turf that they looked after over the years. I think there was a recognition by all branches of the profession, given the modern international economy, the modern national economy, the trade among the provinces, all of the issues that flowed out of the North American free trade agreement, that this idea that the accounting profession should move from a more segmented approach to the profession to a more holistic approach to the profession was paramount in their minds.

Of course, the issue was how to get to that degree of commonality, how to establish the groundwork so that the members of those three branches of the profession could move from branch to branch, could do the work that they had done traditionally, and how they could incorporate or begin to do some of the work of the other segments of the profession.

1630

Some people may say, well, you have three branches of the profession and they were all trying to cut out a piece of the turf for themselves and it was really a professional trade war, if you will. The CAs wanted to do one piece, the CGAs wanted to do another piece, and the CMAs, another piece. I can tell you that that was never, never the case. In all of my dealings with each of those branches of the profession—CAs, CGAs, CMAs—paramount in their discussions and paramount in their minds when they raised issues with me in my capacity as parliamentary assistant was the public interest and how the accounting profession, broadly speaking, should serve the public interest.

At the end of the day, with the kind of economy that we have had traditionally in Ontario and that we're now trying to reach out and even expand and build further with lots of the things that are in our Open Ontario throne speech—and that will be fleshed out in more detail in a couple of days—there was a recognition that the essential thing to get right here was the correct balance between the needs of the accounting profession, speaking generally; the needs of each of the three branches of the accounting profession; and the public interest. The question was how to get that balance right.

In fairness to the professions, and I must compliment each of them for this, whenever we approached an area where it might seem that an issue—perhaps a conflict or a competing interest well short of a conflict; even just a competing interest between the desires, needs and

expectations of the profession and the public interest—each of the branches of the profession ceded their particular interest to the public interest. Again, I do want to compliment the members of the profession for that outstanding level of professionalism.

Because of that outstanding level of professionalism that the profession brought to these discussions, you can be assured that that same level of professionalism is carried forth in the detailed work they do as accountants at whatever branch and in whatever area of accounting, whether it's providing services to a small business in rural Ontario, whether it's providing accounting services to a big multinational company here in Ontario, or anything in between—accounting services to the local barber, some accounting services to the senior who is preparing a tax return. In my judgment, the professionalism that they have shown in putting the public interest forward was truly outstanding.

At the end of the discussions—I fast-forward ahead to March 2009, when we introduced the legislation. I thought it would be appropriate to put on the record three separate quotes from the leadership of each of the branches of the profession. Let me start, in no particular order—in fact, what I'll do is I'll start just randomly.

Doug Brooks, who in March 2009 was the CEO of the Certified General Accountants of Ontario, said this with respect to the legislation: “The new legislation,” if passed, “would be very helpful to us as we seek to modernize the governance of our accounting body. We appreciate the willingness of the government to work with us on the bill and to ensure we have the tools we need, moving into the future.”

What did Mr. Brooks stress? Modernization, governance, working with the government to move into the future; that is, the future economy and the very challenging circumstances that we face here in Ontario to build and grow our businesses, to regulate our businesses and to make Ontario a place where everybody in the world wants to come and do business. One of the reasons they want to come here and do business in Ontario is because of the strength and the integrity and the competency of the accounting profession.

Mr. Tom Warner, who is the vice-president and registrar of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, said, “We are pleased that the government has dealt with a number of issues that we see as essential to our regulatory function in the public interest—notably to permit more effective enforcement of our disciplinary powers, the clear statement of the confidential nature of information that comes to the institute's attention in its work, and an increase in the fines for misuse of the chartered accountant designation by non-members.”

If you look closely at what Mr. Warner has said, he speaks of the regulatory function in the public interest—again, the highest tradition of the accounting profession—and the disciplinary powers to regulate their members—again, in the public interest.

Mr. Merv Hillier, who at the time was the president and CEO of the Society of Management Accountants,

had this to say: “The proposed bill would establish CMAs under the operating name of the organization, Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, with a modern and transparent structure for governing our members. We were happy with the open process of developing the legislation, so that we could see the fair treatment given to all three major accounting bodies in this useful update to our legislation.”

Again, I draw your attention to the themes, in the quote that I've just given by him, of modernization, transparency, and “the open process of developing the legislation”—that is, working with the profession so that we got the balance just right. He particularly noted the fair treatment given to all three major accounting professions in working through this legislation.

I think that those three quotes that I have just provided really corroborate what I said in my earlier remarks about the integrity of the profession and the high standards of the profession as they worked with government to undertake this process.

Let me just go through now some of the specific detail in the legislation so that we can move the debate to more specifics.

The legislation, if passed, will help to ensure that all the designated accounting bodies in Ontario that are or will soon be responsible for regulating public accounting will have the support to oversee their profession. This is essentially a good-governance piece of legislation, the purpose being to ensure that the accounting bodies have the power and structure to serve in the roles anticipated by the Public Accounting Act, going back to 2004. That act modernized the regulation of public accounting while ensuring a continuing high standard of competence from those who qualified for a licence.

This bill, if passed, would modernize and harmonize the governance of the three main accounting bodies in this province—again, these themes: modernization, harmonization and good governance.

The three bodies that are covered—I've already mentioned that, but the technical names are the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, the Certified General Accountants of Ontario and the Society of Management Accountants of Ontario.

The existing statutes that have governed these three bodies are old. Two of them are, in fact, private statutes with no public interest element at all. Under this proposed legislation, all three statutes governing each of those professions would be public acts, and again we have this theme of the public interest and so on.

1640

Now, we talk about the harmonization or the rationalization of the various parts of those three acts that governed the profession until this legislation. Some of the existing powers would be expanded and clarified; others would be adjusted. The proposed legislation will give accounting bodies the following: the power to discipline former members; the power to get a court order to take over a practice of an incapacitated, missing or dead member; the power to review mental capacity of

members; the power to introduce bylaws to ensure full compliance with the Public Accountants Council standard for governing public accountants and various standards, and details about how the licensing process will be enacted.

The effect of these amendments will ensure that Ontario clients can depend on the qualifications and, equally important, on the regulatory oversight of those offering accounting services under the several designations that I've already referred to.

As we heard the Attorney General say earlier, the Accounting Professions Act is the logical complement to the Public Accounting Act of 2004, which gave special status to these three professional bodies. It modernized the regulation of public accounting; it clarified the definition of public accounting, which determines what activities require a licence. That's a very important point because there are activities that individuals might perform in assisting an individual with financial matters that are not accounting practices and there are others that are accounting practices. It's when we cross the line to the accounting practices that the legislation kicks in with its various governance obligations.

The Accounting Professions Act, if passed, is going to emphasize, as I've said several times now, modernization and harmonization and, above all, make accountancy more transparent. If I can just make some reference to some of the financial difficulties that have occurred south of the border in recent years, many of those issues that developed and caused such discord in our economy and in our world of business, when you sit back and take a hard look at it and analyze some of the detail, are really transparency issues. There were various accountancy processes and transactions going on in the books and so forth and so on that really were so opaque that the public had great difficulty understanding them, and the accepted wisdom is that was certainly one of the factors leading to the economic difficulties, particularly south of the border. That's why this legislation has such an emphasis on modernization, transparency, discipline—accountability, in short.

The proposed legislation does not impose new burdens on the accounting bodies but really clarifies their powers and obligations and, in particular, the legislation does not impose any new burdens on the accountants' clients. The legislation really is directed to the profession, which will then make all of the necessary adjustments to effect the legislation.

The proposed bill would also ensure that the objectives of all three bodies in the accounting profession, including governing their members, are in the public interest. Again, I come back to this issue of the public interest, because in the last analysis, what this legislation is all about is to create a level of public protection, to protect the public's interest in the accountancy profession and the effect that the accountancy profession has on the activities of the members of the public.

It will also establish the basic rights and duties of a member. This is very important because for the first time,

the rights and duties of membership in the profession are going to be clearly set out. Again, this can be found in the previous statutes, but the problem is that they're buried in different statutes, they're buried within the regulations that surround each of the statutes, and it's very, very difficult at times to dig out the detail of just what the basic rights and the particular duties and obligations of members are.

This legislation, bringing the three branches of the accounting profession together, again, is a modernization, a rationalization, all with the idea behind it that whatever is being done by the legislation—then, once the legislation is passed, by the members themselves and the respective governing bodies—everything is done in the public interest.

The legislation generally clarifies the role of the act. Particularly, it clarifies the role of the bylaws pursuant to the act, and it authorizes matters that need to be authorized, remitting the technical matters to the bylaws. Now, rather than having three acts, two of which were private acts, and three sets of regulations pursuant to three acts, as I've said, two of which were private acts, we're going to have one piece of legislation. This is good for the accounting profession, it's good for the public and it's good for our economy. It creates that level of confidence when businesses are being newly set up, when they're expanding, when they're just at a maintenance level, when businesses are deciding whether to come from a foreign jurisdiction or another province to locate in Ontario. One of the great attractions is the stability, the clarity, the fairness and the transparency of the accounting profession. I suppose that's the single greatest thing that this legislation is going to do.

The new statute, then, relative to the three statutes that governed the profession before we introduced this bill—at its heart, it's a manageable statute. There's a clarity there. It's easy to understand by the members of the accounting profession; it's easy to understand by any layperson who wants to look into it and find out what the obligations of a member of the profession are and how things work. It's easy to understand for everybody. That's good, because the things that business needs and wants are clarity, simplicity and effectiveness.

The bill would also establish the parameters of how membership status of individuals, firms and corporations are going to be determined. The bill provides general duty on regulatory bodies to keep all of their information confidential except for particular listed exceptions in the act or with court approval to release that detail. Again, that is a confidence-building detail. People will have confidence that the proprietary material and the confidential material that their accountants have to deal with will be kept confidential, except for some very specific, listed items and, of course, the overall supervision of the courts.

As I said in my introductory remarks, the accounting bodies were extensively consulted on this bill and support the provisions, and we continue to work with the accounting profession as we walk this bill through the

Legislature. This is a strong piece of legislation that is going to ensure greater public transparency for the accounting profession and provide the accounting profession with much-needed powers to regulate the aspects of their profession. That was one of the things that I heard early on from each of the professions when I first tackled these issues.

1650

Having touched on these things, you can see why the best way to think about this piece of legislation is that it's really a piece of consumer protection legislation, because the businesses, people doing their income tax returns, members of the profession, anybody who needs—in fact, at some time in our life we all need the services of an accountant. Certainly, if you just close your eyes for a second and think of a society where the accountancy profession is unregulated, chaotic, not supervised, ill disciplined, the very first thing that happens is the economy breaks down. The economy breaks down because members of the public, foreign jurisdictions, foreign banks, domestic banks, lose confidence in the transparency, the clarity and the fairness of the system. You only have to turn your mind to some foreign jurisdictions that we read about in the paper, where the accountancy profession has broken down. Almost the first thing that happens is the economy breaks down. People lose confidence, and it's a downhill trip from there.

As I said, as I've been working through on this issue, I've had a number of quite specific questions and answers that have come before me, and I thought I would share some of those with you.

This is a question that commonly comes up: "Will the bill be amended to permit the use of foreign accounting designations that may be the same as or close to recognized Canadian designations?" Well, we heard from several foreign-based accounting organizations, from their members, from immigrant assistance bodies, that holders of foreign designations should not be barred from using those designations here, especially to attract business from people who recognize the designations from their country of origin. We reflected on that, and I think the Attorney General touched base on that in his comments. What the government has to do is balance the interest of foreign-trained accountants to use their foreign designations with the interest in potential Ontario clients of accountants to rely on the qualifications and oversight of the bodies whose initials are familiar to them. The government—and this is an important piece of the intent here—will propose amendments to the bill to clarify the extent of the rights to use confusing foreign designations. These amendments will clarify that situation.

Another question that I've heard asked several times is, "Does the proposed legislation affect new labour mobility rules of the Agreement on Internal Trade?" The answer is, no, the proposed legislation does not affect labour mobility rules or prevent all three of the accounting bodies from being compliant with them.

Let me tell you something about the membership. Another question that I get asked a lot is, "Does it make

sense for a membership organization to have any say over its former members?" So we're talking about a member who has retired from the profession, resigned from the profession or is no longer practising as an accountant. The organizations are regulators, not just membership organizations. For instance, the Ontario College of Teachers and all the regulated health professions have the same powers to regulate former members. Being able to pursue former members prevents them from preserving a clean record by a timely resignation. So there's no more of, if there's a spot of trouble, one resigns and then at some point later tries to come back or avoids having to deal with the issue that perhaps caused the person to resign. A full discipline record can protect the public when former members apply for readmission or admission in another province.

I just wanted to touch on a couple of those things because it emphasizes this issue of transparency, discipline of members, clarity and, above all, as I've said, it being a piece of consumer protection legislation, the public interest.

Just let me take a minute and touch on perhaps looking into the future a bit. We were all here the other day for the throne speech, and the theme of the throne speech was Open Ontario. I spoke to the throne speech yesterday morning and talked about the economy of the province being at a fork in the road. We're at a very difficult stage in our economic life here in Ontario and we have some choices to make. We can go forward into a new Ontario. We can do whatever we have to do to rebuild and continue to build the Ontario economy. We will do whatever we have to do to rebuild and recapture our manufacturing base in Ontario. We will do everything we can to develop new business entrepreneurship, clean water, green energy. All of those sorts of stuff—that's looking into the future. What we don't want to do at the fork in the road is go back.

So, how does this accounting legislation play into that? In any competitive economy in the world—and make no mistake about it, Ontario is in a very competitive economic world. We have to compete with China. We have to compete with India. We have to compete with the United States, 50 of those states, particularly the border states along here. We have to compete with the EU.

One of the very effective attractions when we're in that global economic competition—we're all competing for those foreign businesses. We want them to come to Ontario. We want them to locate in the GTA. I want them to locate in Willowdale. That's my plug for Willowdale. Whether we're Conservative members, NDP members or Liberal members, one thing we all agree on is that we want that foreign business here in Ontario. One of the things that we can do to attract them is to offer businesses throughout the world one of the finest accounting professions in the world. That's the reputation that the accounting profession in Ontario has had over the generations. This new legislation will ensure that that reputation continues—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened pretty intensively to the Attorney General when he spoke, and for the last while, I've been enduring the member from Willowdale. I'll get a copy of Hansard and certainly brush through it.

He said in his summation remarks that we're in a global environment and accounting trustworthiness is extremely important. We all agree with this. It's not a problem. But he says we're competing with India. In fact, I'm going introduce a bit of a change. We're not competing just with India. It looks like we're competing with Korea. It also looks like Ontario is actually competing directly with Greece.

Look, David Dodge, the former Bank of Canada governor, suggests that there is a significant "structural" deficit in the economy of Ontario.

1700

So we should call all three of these accounting organizations into the Legislature, right on the floor, and get to the bottom of this \$25-billion deficit. Where has the money gone? It appears to me that the Minister of Finance and the Premier aren't capable of spending Ontario taxpayers' money wisely. You, the taxpayers of Ontario: I'm dealing directly with you now; I'm standing up for you. What I'm trying to say is, we have a deficit in this province and we need—

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker: The member for Durham seeks to call the members of the accounting bodies onto the floor, but if the member would check the standing orders, he would find that strangers are, in fact, not allowed on the floor. So what he is proposing is in fact beyond the scope of the Legislature—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. That is not a point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: The unworthy interruptions by this member are just intolerable. We agree with you—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the Attorney General and then I tried to listen as well, intently, to the member from Willowdale. I kept hoping that his colleague in the next seat, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, would turn the pages faster, sort of like at a piano recital when you have someone who flips the pages, so that we could get to the end a little sooner.

I also watched with great interest the pages, because, as I look at those young faces, I know that their colleagues are having math lessons, and I could read into those young faces that they wished they were having math lessons today instead of having to listen to this.

As I listened to the Attorney General, he was full of passion. I don't know where he saw passion in all of this, but he had some passion. When I listened to the member from Willowdale, he talked about a whole bunch of things, but one of the strangest and most bizarre comments that he had to make, and I hope he comments on this, is that he likens this to some kind of consumer

protection. Consumer protection, I always thought, was in the ambit of the government to make sure that companies don't rip off consumers, to make sure that companies are getting their money's worth and that people don't finagle others out of dollars and things like that. I'm not sure how this bill fits in with consumer protection.

I do see the necessity of the bill. I do understand why these groups have to be regulated with the public rather than private bills. I do understand a great many things. But perhaps in the two minutes he has left, he can elucidate, in clear and certain terms, terms that the pages and I can understand, exactly how this equates to consumer protection, because really in his comments he lost, I think, all of us on this particular point.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I am pleased to rise and make a few comments on the Accounting Professions Act that was just presented to the House for an hour by Minister Bentley and the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Zimmer. I think they did a commendable job and certainly encapsulated everything the bill could possibly have in it, at least from my view. There may be other points that they maybe did not get to. But I think, as Minister Bentley said, we have all probably used accountants from time to time, and we respect and certainly appreciate the good work that they do at all different levels.

I think it's important to note that I didn't hear any particular comment in disagreement with the bill, and I think it's important, even to that point, to say that the minister did say that the bill, like virtually all our government bills, will be going to committee, where the opposition and the government can continue a fulsome discussion on Bill 158.

The parliamentary assistant also quoted from the three various bodies that are affected by this bill in a positive way and the view that they have that this bill indeed did go through consultation with all three of the groups. They, too, believe that it is important to their various organizations and that the consultation was fulsome.

If this bill were to be passed, it would contribute to the competitiveness of our financial sector by strengthening and supporting the bodies that govern professional accountants. Our government is proposing to ensure greater transparency for the accounting profession. There are many other points that the parliamentary assistant alluded to. I look forward to the continuation of the debate and, of course, when this bill would be referred to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I was interested in the words of the minister and Attorney General, and the member for Willowdale. I listened very carefully. Both of them talked about accounting being very important to Ontario business, being very important to the businesses in Ontario that go beyond the borders of Ontario, not only to the rest of Canada but also out across the world.

In getting ready for this bill to come to the House, we have done some background work and worked with the CGAs—the Certified General Accountants of Ontario—the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario. None of these bodies have any problems whatsoever with this act. They are all very supportive of this bill and they look forward to its speedy passing in the House.

There is only one voice of dissent that I have heard concerning this legislation, and that is from the CIMAs, the international management accountants, who are based in England. They have about 1,000 members operating in Ontario. They have authorities around the world. If you think about it, the British did business around the world, and this is an accounting organization that operated around the world, giving some consistency to accounting practices around the world. This bill does not take into account their operations in Ontario. If these accountants are not recognized in this bill, it takes Ontario out of the international industry more than it puts us in, so perhaps in his two-minute response, the parliamentary assistant could talk about the CIMAs and whether or not they're going to be recognized in this bill and accommodated in some fashion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: Let me thank the member opposite from Halton for recognizing and agreeing with me in my remarks that the CMAs, the CGAs and the CAs are supportive of the legislation, that they've worked with government to ensure that the very best bill came forward.

With respect to your inquiry about foreign designations, I think I did touch—in fact, I know I touched on that in my remarks in the 35 minutes that I spoke, so I direct you to the Hansard remarks on that.

What I wanted to just address in the last minute that I have here is that in the throne speech, there was a very clear reference to the ambition of this government to turn Toronto into a global financial centre. That was touched on several times in the throne speech and it was picked up in the press commentary following the throne speech. That's an idea that has been around now for several years. Toronto here in Ontario has achieved a critical mass of the financial sector, principally centred in Toronto, and it's recognized as the third largest financial centre in North America. Among many, many Europeans it's recognized as the leading centre. This new legislation governing the accounting profession is an aspect of turning Toronto into a global financial centre, and that's good for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to say that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member over here for Durham; the member for east of Toronto.

Interjection.

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Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you. Everybody knows John.

It's interesting that this debate quite often shifts to the economy of Ontario and Toronto becoming the fiscal centre of the country and North America—and it's very true. I would look forward to the day when Toronto would be the financial capital of North America. Given the financial meltdown we've seen in the United States, that will move Toronto along that line if in fact the financial community has the conditions in which they're able to grow and prosper. It will depend on this government's performance over the next little while, particularly next Thursday when we get the budget handed down, and whether we're going to see a budget that creates the economic opportunities for the financial community or a budget that focuses on other areas of the economy to the detriment of those areas in which we have a real possibility of becoming global leaders.

Public accounting is an interesting field. In the last little while getting ready for this bill, I've learned more about the public accounting area than I ever thought I would. It is an interesting field, in that it is broken down into a number of different areas. As I mentioned in my questions and comments, there are three principal parties who work in Ontario: the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, commonly known as CAs; the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, or the CMAs; and the Certified General Accountants of Ontario. They are all accountants, they all do work, so I think it's appropriate to ask, what is an accountant, and particularly, what is a public accountant?

Public accounting is the business of expressing independent assurance on financial statements and other financial information of enterprises of every size, to ensure that the information truly reflects their financial conditions. So if this is an independent organization which has a look at using the same standards for every time they look at books, whether they be books of a small company, a large company or a non-profit organization—they use standard procedures. Large and small investors, financial institutions and other third parties then use that assurance to help them make informed investment and lending decisions. Many of those decisions involve investments in RSPs, mutual or pension funds, stock markets etc., making the practice of public accounting relevant to nearly every individual in Ontario. It touches the lives of everyone in this province. It's important to understand that public accounting is something that we may not think of on a day-to-day basis, but it's something that does impact on our day-to-day lives.

The three organizations that operate in Ontario are not identical. They're not necessarily competitive, although their responsibilities do cross over slightly.

Let me start with the Certified General Accountants of Ontario, or CGAs. They currently operate under a private bill, as the minister and the parliamentary assistant pointed out. A private bill is something that comes before the House. It's largely drafted by the organization, and it states their principles as to what they're going to do.

In the case of CGAs, they're affiliated with the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada.

CGA Canada represents CGAs and students in Canada, as well as Bermuda and nations of the Caribbean, the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong. This is truly an international organization. It represents people all over the world. CGA Canada sets educational standards, professional guidelines, provides services and develops the CGA program of professional studies. It also contributes to national and international accounting standards-setting through co-operative professional relationships with other accounting bodies, represents the interests of the public and CGAs, and serves as an advocate for accounting professional excellence.

With the passing of this bill, the CGAs will have on their board of directors three representatives, whom they currently appoint, who are non-CGAs. Those three appointments to their board will now be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. They'll still be members of the general public but they won't be appointed by the organization; they'll be appointed by the government. So that opens that up a bit and makes it a little more democratic.

CGA Ontario is a self-governing body which grants an exclusive right to the CGA designation and controls the professional standards, conduct and discipline of its members and students in the province of Ontario. It represents more than 18,000 CGAs and 9,000 students. A list of current committees and representatives can be found at—and I want to read this website address into the record—cga-ontario.org/contentfiles/about_us/board_chart.pdf. Only an accountant would come up with a Web address like that. I think that's one of the longest ones I've seen.

In contrast to that, the Certified Management Accountants, the CMAs, are also authorized in Ontario by a private bill. This act will change that into a government bill, and in so doing, the government will appoint members to their board and open that up to public scrutiny as well. So that's a good thing.

CMAs provide an integrating perspective to business decision-making, applying best management practices and strategic planning, finance, operations, sales and marketing, information technology and human resources to identify new marketing opportunities, ensure corporate accountability and help organizations maintain a long-term competitive advantage. You can see how this differs from the CGA, which is much more of a bookkeeping process. CMAs are much more of a management process, as the name implies.

CMA Canada grants a professional designation in management accounting and regulates its members under the authorization of provincial legislation. CMA Canada is a partnership of the Society of Management Accountants of Canada and the orders of management accountants of each province. The provincial and territorial partners support their regional memberships and maintain high standards for accreditation and continued competency.

Now we move to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, the so-called CAs, which most people think of when they think of accountants or auditors. The Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants is a national

body which sets generally accepted accounting principles and generally accepted auditing standards.

The provincial institutes set and enforce standards of qualification and set and enforce the standards of professional conduct. In 1990 the rules of professional conduct were harmonized across Canada.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario was founded in 1879 and is the qualifying and regulatory body of Ontario's 33,000 chartered accountants, and there are 5,000 CA students. Currently, oversight is provided by the public accountants council of Ontario, comprised of a majority of eminent non-accountants, as well as representatives of the province's three recognized accounting bodies, and which, to date, has authorized only the institute to serve as a public accounting licensing body.

The background papers talk about An Act respecting the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario in 1983. The original purposes of the association were to furnish means and facilities by which members of the association and students may increase their knowledge, skill and efficiencies in all things. They also were to hold examinations, prescribe tests of competency, and also to maintain discipline amongst their members.

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In light of the more limited purposes of the association and the lack of provisions related to committees and tribunals, the bylaws were similarly more limited, and the private act that implemented the association provided the framework for granting membership. Appeals were made to the Divisional Court and all members in good standing were to be listed in the public register. That was before they were able to have their own body to make appeals to.

The act provides for the designation of CGAs. That was the original concept of the CGAs as they moved on.

The positions of these three bodies: The CGAs of Ontario welcome the proposed Accounting Professions Act. "The Certified General Accountants of Ontario ... both welcomes and supports the proposed Accounting Professions Act announced today. If passed, the act would provide increased public transparency for accounting professionals, while granting their governing bodies the ability to better protect their clients and the public. The act would help to further define the authority of the three accounting bodies: the Certified General Accountants of Ontario, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario and the Society of Management Accountants of Ontario, working toward greater equality for accounting professionals across Ontario and increasing accountability." The CGAs have unqualified support for this new act.

When it comes to the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario—these are the people who manage the large and small businesses. When we spoke to the Institute of Certified Management Accountants, they indicated that they support the legislation. They have no concerns with the legislation, which is for the most part housekeeping, in their opinion, to account for existing

practices which the existing legislation no longer adequately addresses. It's an update of the status quo that they are happy with.

When it comes to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, the institute has worked with the government on this legislation. When we spoke to them, the institute gave indications that they support the legislation. They have no concerns with the legislation, which is for the most part housekeeping to account for existing practices, which the existing legislation no longer adequately addresses.

The three main bodies that it is dealing with support the legislation, as we will on this side of the House. The only fly in the ointment, as it were—earlier I asked the minister to comment on it; he says he did in his remarks, but I don't recall hearing anything in his speech, and I thought I was listening fairly closely. CIMA, which is an organization that is based in Britain—it is the certified international management accountants, I believe—is not recognized in this bill. There's a clause in the bill which indicates that anybody who uses the letters CMA in their name will be subject to fines, and I believe the fines are something in the order of \$10,000. If you look at their initials, it's CIMA, but CMA is in that name and therefore they would not qualify to practise in Ontario.

There are approximately 3,500 of these CIMA accountants in Canada, with 1,000 of them residing in Ontario. They are based in Britain—the UK. In the UK, of course, in the days of the British Empire, accountants would work around the world in the British Empire, and it was important that they had standards throughout the empire that were readable and understandable by the people who were investing, whether they be in foreign countries or in the United Kingdom. So it became an internationally respected and understood organization.

When this bill was introduced, it was important enough that the British consulate came to talk to the Attorney General. We heard that there was some solution to the concerns, but we have not heard what those solutions were, and before this bill goes to committee, it would be very helpful to know from the government how those concerns have been met and why and how CIMA is accommodated in this new act. In trying to contact them in the last couple of days, I have not been successful, but I would like to represent their case to ensure that Canada and Ontario continue to recognize an international body. But as we all recognize and as the parliamentary assistant talked about, we do recognize Ontario as being an international trader, somebody who does business around the world, and it seems to me that we would have a natural use, a natural partnership with an accounting organization that did that work around the world as well.

I would like to see that the CIMA and ACCA designations, both very similar organizations, are accommodated in this act in some fashion so that they can continue to represent Ontario's interests not only in Ontario but around the world.

With that, I think we look forward to the—in order to accommodate those two organizations, this bill will have

to briefly go to committee. I hope the government would see fit to take it to committee so that an amendment can be attached to ensure that these thousands of Ontarians can continue to practise in the way that they have in the past and that their business is not interrupted by the passage of this new bill.

Other than that, we look forward to the speedy passage of this bill, with a brief stay in committee in order to pass a couple of amendments, and we look forward to the government's support of those suggestions.

With that, I would be pleased to pass the floor to my friend from Durham.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, I listened intently to my good friend and our party's critic, Mr. Chudleigh from Halton. He follows this quite rigorously and has been very helpful in advising our caucus on the work and progress that has been made, and I think he's made a valid contribution.

He has described most of the mechanics of the bill. Bill 158—I think we're all familiar with it—is about 86 pages, so it's a hefty little piece of legislation. But, in fact, if you drill down on it, it really has three separate sections, and those sections of course are divided by the three groups, the three accounting organizations that exist in some form or other today. Then the three sections go into some detail under schedule A for the certified general accountants—schedule B deals with the certified management accountants, and schedule C deals with the CAs or the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

I guess people's eyes start to glaze over, because if you look at this, the three subsections deal in complete detail with pretty much the same set of rules for each of the three organizations. The act, as it says, is to repeal and replace the statutes governing currently, today, the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario, the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, and the Institute of Chartered Accountants, rolling them into one sort of organization. But they still have differences, and I think this is the important thing we should roll out here.

There's an age-old problem that has existed in the accounting profession of the right to do the public audit. That has been the timeless issue, which I don't think is resolved. It's my opinion that the governing body will allow people to write the uniform final exam, which is really organized by the CAs, who are the only ones who are allowed to do the public audits. I think when you look at the traditions of those organizations they've been around for more than 100 years, it's my understanding, and in that time have proven themselves to be an asset, not just to Ontario but to Canada.

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When you look at other provinces, if we're trying to harmonize under the Labour Mobility Act, other provinces allow the other designations to do different functions. So we're not there yet in the context of having a single financial regulator: a securities market. We need to move, again.

This is going to public hearings, it's my understanding. As our critic has advised us, we are in support of the bill as it stands at the moment. He has put forward some clear and more or less technical amendments dealing with the issue of the two groups that are affected; they're both international groups. It's important to look at how long this thing has been dangling out there. In fact, it was introduced here in March 2009—actually, a year ago today: March 23, 2009. It has taken a long time to get us to the middle of the road, so we're not done.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: We've listened to two rather long and repetitive speeches on our side—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen quite intently.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Your eyes tend to glaze over.

Accounting is a profession where you have to pay attention to detail.

I did read an article here which I think is important to bring to the discussion—how it does affect people's lives. The legislation that we're dealing with, Bill 158, does affect people's lives. Changes by government, although well-intended, always have adverse effects on some group. Whether it's changing the role, for instance, of professions under their own colleges, as we're doing today with the full-day or all-day kindergarten—ECE, early childhood educators, are regulated by their own legislative framework, but educators are regulated as well. There's another group where they're maybe not being treated the same, but they will be doing roughly the same thing in the classroom. In this case here, the article I'm referring to is from July 15, 2009, and it's titled, "Foreign-trained Accountants Fear Fines under Ontario Law," Bill 158.

I can point to that section. In the sections of (a), (b) or (c) that I mentioned earlier, in each one of them, it says here, under sections 26 to 31:

"The act creates prohibitions and offences respecting the use of specified designations and initials by unauthorized individuals or entities" from practising as a CIMA, CGA, CA—they all say the same thing—to hold themselves out as one of those designations or to make use of "designations, initials or other text implying that they are entitled to practise as a certified" or other type of an accountant. "A limitation period of two years applies in respect of the offences."

It goes on, to some extent. These are the governance issues about the colleges or the oversight of the profession and how the discipline is executed and what it is. But how does it affect people's lives?

I'm reading the article:

"For more than a decade, Martin Saxton, an accountant originally from Scotland who now has a Toronto business, has printed the professional credentials he earned in the UK on his business cards and resumé.

"Saxton, who runs Arrow Accounting and Book-keeping on Danforth Ave., uses his Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA)"—as my colleague from Halton said—"designation, a credential he says is

internationally recognized and that takes an average of three to four years of study to earn." At the same time, we're trying to say that we're globalizing and reaching out for labour mobility.

It goes on to say, "But now he, like other foreign-trained accountants"—in fact, other foreign-trained professionals—"fears he will be penalized under a recent Ontario law." He's referring to Bill 158. "Saxton says he will have to stop using his UK professional designation in promoting his business, or face a fine of up to \$10,000." That's a tax grab, a cash grab.

He goes on: "There are roughly 1,000 people working in Canada with credentials from CIMA. As well, there are about 2,500 who have a designation from the UK-based Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), another internationally recognized body."

It has come to my attention with a few phone calls that there are about 150 countries that recognize these two UK designations. We take great pride in the respect of the association, especially CAs, and I don't point them out, and yet these are much older and probably under much more scrutiny, or at least for a longer period of time serving the public.

They're getting into the exceptions here, and this is important for the public. This part is an important part because—by the way, these individuals are going to be taxed. As of July 1, there will be HST. When you do your income tax next year—in fact, it will be due at the end of the month here—there will be a new tax of 8%, thanks to Premier McGuinty, another tax grab. Here's what the truth is: Accountants in Ontario—this is important now—do not have to be licensed to file income tax. We have a lot of people putting out shingles here, so we're going to have accountant police running around all over the province giving out tickets of up to—here it is—\$10,000. So any of these highly skilled people without the qualifications or designation—if you put it out there as, "I'm an auditor. I'm one of these terms," you could be fined, and it's Premier McGuinty's police who will be after you. I don't use this in a menacing manner. I say it's more father-knows-best thinking.

Yet they're not in conformance with all of Canada. This is the contradiction here. We've got the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, which is an attempt to get all professions between the provinces, including trades, to be mobile, to move with the liberties and freedoms that we all, as Canadians and Ontarians, expect. Here we have a damper on this because we're not in compliance. I put that on the table for the minister, and I'm sure it will be addressed, because many young people today work in what I call the digital world. If you have read, for instance—the one I like best is *The World is Flat*, and some people may have read that; or *Hot, Flat and Crowded*, his recent book. It says that most accounting in the United States is now being done in India—Bangalore, India.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: Bangalore.

Mr. John O'Toole: Bangalore, exactly. But my point being, without the proper words, it's being done in a virtual world. That's as much as we need to know.

In fact, the same practice applies to law itself, and also to other trades and skill sets: radiology and other skill sets, including architecture.

This bill is very superficial in terms of agreeing with professions that are moving slowly under some pressure from the government. I give the government respect: We are supporting this and moving forward to get some harmony, at least amongst the groups in the province. But I'm not digressing. I think if we really want to be leaders and have a vision for Ontario, and we're talking about Ontario being the centre for finance and banking—and I'm in support of this—I don't think we have the leadership and the courage on the other side. This isn't meant in a malicious, partisan way. There's nothing here that I think is new. It's 86 pages, and you can change the reference to the three designations and cut it down by 60 pages.

If I go out and look at these poor people—not poor; these are highly qualified, skilled people from other countries—under the two designations, ACCA and CIMA, they will be threatened with a \$10,000 fine. But the Ontario government—and I'm reading again here—says, “The bill is meant to ensure greater transparency.” I love that: transparency and accountability. They use it in all the words. It's anything but. We should be calling the auditors in to look at eHealth, and in fact we should be looking at the LHINs and calling them to account. The OLG—the WSIB is running a deficit. We need to hire some of these accountants, because it's out of control.

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Let's look at the real numbers here. The budget is about \$106 billion. We're running a deficit of about \$25 billion. That's 25 cents on every dollar that we're borrowing. That's future taxes. Deficits are future taxes, so stay tuned. This government is going over the cliff in terms of any plan.

I can only say that when I look at things like this—this is a real story; I'd encourage members to get a copy of it. Martin Saxton, a native of Scotland who now runs a Toronto accounting business, was basically put out of work, like a lot of the 150,000 people who have lost jobs under Premier McGuinty's plan, or lack of it.

Also, it's important to recognize that, for instance, a financial adviser, these people with designations, FPA and all these other designations as a financial planner—this is another highly convoluted—I don't know if they're properly regulated, but they have to be members of one of the three regulatory bodies to perform any audit. So if somebody is doing a financial analysis or assessment of your investment portfolio, your retirement portfolio, and puts themselves out as a certified financial planner, CFPA and all these designations, they are not qualified to use the term “audit” unless they have one of the three designations. It's very important.

This is when you get right down into the detail.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Are you going until 6?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm trying to make sure that we—yes. We're trying to get to the details of this bill; it's so important, and there's a lot more to be said.

“Paul Costello, head of ACCA in Canada and the US”—this is the association for chartered accountants—“says people should not be charged and fined for using foreign credentials unless they present themselves as chartered accountants when they are not.” I fully endorse that. We have to respect those citizens of Ontario and Canada.

It's my understanding that there are 30,000 chartered accountants in Ontario—In fact, every night I watch the Steve Paikin show when I can, and they sponsor his program, *The Agenda*. They always say that there are 30,000 chartered accountants in Ontario. There are about another 5,000 in the loop, studying. It's very rigorous. A lot of the individuals have to write the uniform final exam, the UFE, a couple of times to pass it. In fact, a cousin of mine who's now deceased, Pat O'Toole, was highly successful as a chartered accountant and had a business in Barrie and died a few years ago. I know how hard he worked and how intelligent he was.

This Friday—and this is sort of an invitation to the general public—at the Zante Restaurant in Bowmanville I'm having the accounting firm of Hobbs and Co. do an analysis of the Ontario budget, free of charge with no political spin on it.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Wayne Arthurs will be there.

Mr. John O'Toole: I hope Wayne comes, because Wayne is assistant to the Minister of Finance. If he has nothing better to do, then there mustn't be much in the budget.

I'm also doing one at 10:30 in the morning at Port Perry, and that is being done by Randy Keller, Keller & Associates, a chartered accountant from Port Perry, and I invite the people from anywhere, basically, to attend. The reason I do that is, I attend to see what the public is thinking about the budget.

In fairness, none of us here, except perhaps Mr. Arthurs from Scarborough-Pickering or whatever—he's the parliamentary assistant to finance, and I had that same job back some years ago—he may be privy to some of the things that are coming in here. I would hope that in the budget they have something for seniors. I say this with all sincerity. It is related to this, and I'll get back on track here shortly. The big thing is, I also hope that they do something for gas prices.

One of the suggestions I've put on the table is, they should offset—Madam Speaker, you know this as well. Gas today is about \$1 a litre, and of that, there's a flat tax, 14.7 cents, which is an ad valorem tax. It doesn't go up and down; it's 14.7 cents. So if gas was 50 cents a litre, it would still be 14.7 cents a litre for the government's revenue. If gas went to \$2, it would still be 14.7 cents a litre; it's not a percentage. If you look at a flat tax, 14.7 cents or a percentage, there's quite a difference; it's subtle—but they're going to apply 8% more on a tax. Now, this will garner them about \$1 billion in additional revenue by putting the tax on a tax, and it's unconscionable.

I think it should be challenged as a charter—I'm putting out this as the function of the accountants of this

province, and we should listen to them. They have a reception or an information thing tonight where we should actually be asking for them to comment on the fairness.

The reason this is being wrapped around is, I've had several forums for my constituents in the riding of Durham where I've listened to their concerns about the HST. These are not precipitating some sort of revolt or raising anxiety levels. They're open. I've spoken to three or four Rotary Clubs in Uxbridge, Port Perry, Oshawa in fact, as well as Bowmanville, and what I have done is, I've been giving out a booklet. You should look it up on the certified general accountants' website. There's a very good booklet which talks about the HST. It's quite fair-minded, but it does list—it's almost two pages of new items and services that we will be taxed.

People who have home services, have RSPs or get their income tax done, all of these things, these services by lawyers, accountants, physiotherapists and nutritionists will all be taxed. So if you're going to a physiotherapist after July 1, try to make a payment ahead of July 1 because it's going to cost you 8% more. If it's \$100, it will now be \$108. If you go every week that's \$8 more a week. There are 52 weeks; that's \$400 more in tax that you're going to pay for that service. Every time you get a statement from your accountant, there's going to be a little—you know, where they put the tax on there. Every time you do anything, getting gas, paying your Internet, you're going to pay 8% more. That's right out of your pocket.

In fact, we have it from accountants that I've spoken with, the only reason that they're doing the HST is this: They have a deficit. We understand that. There are more pressures as people are losing their jobs and companies are moving. It's tragic what's happening. Ontario is crumbling under the weight of the burdens of red tape, and with that, these people demand more social assistance and other programs. But here's the deal: They have a deficit, so to solve that deficit, they're increasing taxes. It's called HST.

Now, the CGAs that I talked to, as part of the audit they do, looking at business and personal things, are saying that there's about two more pages of items that will be taxed. So we need the integrity and transparency and accountability that's mentioned in this bill to be front and centre.

I honestly think that, for the most part, we're in agreement with the bill, as we've tried to point out. I also say that we're in a global economy, which is a fair comment. The global economy means that you could actually get your accounting done in India, Bolivia, Austria or Switzerland.

In fact, for the record, I'm not mentioning names. My daughter and future son-in-law—he's a securities lawyer in the Isle of Man. They do transactions all over the world. So this is not revolutionary here. This is not something beyond comprehension. What's missing is a vision for all the professional designations to get together to recognize or provide a process for validating their credentials before they come to Canada.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I thought you were going to talk about a Swiss bank account.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, you know, in the global economy, in the context we're talking about, these accountant functions and the rigours and disciplines, especially as mentioned—and I think this is important to mention. These are self-regulatory organizations or professions and, as such, they spend a fair amount of the language in this 86-page bill dealing with such things as memberships, prohibitions, complaints and disciplines, bankruptcies and insolvencies, practice inspections, capacity, investigations and inspection powers, custodial responsibilities, miscellaneous provisions, bylaws, transitional issues—we're getting to the legislation framework we have now, as well as looking backwards. Liabilities, for instance: Audits that were done on corporation filings, like Bre-X and those kinds of filings, that were done with falsified securities or misrepresentations of financial order in the business will retroactively be liable. It's my understanding that this will hold them to account as long as they shall live. So that it will certainly encourage them to do as much due diligence as possible.

1750

I'm just going to read, because of the time allowed here, a couple of sections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You've still got 18 minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not going to have enough time really to get to the bottom of this and really move it forward. It's going to be difficult.

Let's just look at this one provision here, investigations and inspection powers, which, under the CGAs, is sections 50 to 54. That's where the real detail is. It says that the act provides for the appointment of investigators—appointment. Who would be appointing them? I hope they're not orders in council, because they might be some of the political people, which would not be good. It provides appointments for investigators and inspectors to conduct investigations and inspections under the act and sets out their powers. Who's going to outline these powers? This will all be done in regulation, and that's where the devil is in the details. If these are political appointments, I'm not for it at all. If we want it clear and transparent, we need to have qualified people who have earned the respect of their profession to go in and do the audit, as they do with the medical exams—what do they call it? Mr. Wilson from Simcoe—Grey: What do they call the oversight with the College of Physicians and Surgeons? They must have a medical examiner, people who go around and do audits, medical audits. You're a former Minister of Health. They look into these violations or infringements of practices.

I would only say that the question I need answered when it comes down to this committee is: Who appoints these inspectors and investigators and who sets out the powers? It will be done, I hope, in consultation with the profession itself. But that's the detail.

In the face of it all, doctors or other professions carry insurance against liabilities of failure, or errors and

omissions insurance. Any deliberate intent, of course, would be, I think, sort of a criminal charge, probably, if they falsified, deliberately and knowingly, things, as we've seen under Bernie Madoff and those kinds of characters in the United States who have been prosecuted.

This is important. Let's not trivialize it. Let's recognize that it is going to committee. We haven't got the full job done. The three organizations aren't harmoniously organized with other provinces, as I understand. Ontario would be the last place in Canada right now to be giving anybody advice. When you look at the deficit they're running—and they're raising the taxes again. They've doubled the spending, almost. Unbelievable. We should be calling on these audit groups, all three of them, to come in here and—Mr. McCarter, the Auditor General for the province of Ontario, does a report every year—an excellent, professional example of an independent officer of the Legislature. We need more people like him. At the same time, this government is going to fire the Ombudsman and they're going to fire the Environmental Commissioner. To me, these are the very people we need when the going gets tough. You need to hold people's feet to the fire.

I think the accountants have earned that respect and reputation on all sides of the House. They're the right people at the right time to do the right job. I call on them to work in co-operation with our leader, Tim Hudak, our critic, Mr. Chudleigh, and our finance critic, Norm Miller. We will go along with most of this stuff. We'll be there at the committees. We'll be making sure we get it right. We'll be making sure the Attorney General doesn't try to skate around—some of these appointments, we don't want them to be political; we want them to be professional, competent, qualified people to make Ontario a stronger province for us, our families, our children, including the pages here today.

Madam Speaker, there isn't enough time to bring more clarity to this bill, so with that—I'm leaving quite a bit of time left—with your indulgence, I'll stop now.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend Mr. O'Toole from Durham for his concerns and his knowledge of the accounting practice.

I can say that, from the three Canadian accounting bodies' perspective, the act appears to be an effective housekeeping update of the three accounting bodies' governing statutes. The bill, in our opinion, clarifies the authority of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, the Certified General Accountants of Ontario and the Society of Management Accountants of Ontario to govern their members while attempting to increase accountability to the public for their work. For the CGAs and CMAs, the bill is essentially a housekeeping bill.

This has been an ongoing problem for years, with the three groups pitted against each other for, maybe, jurisdiction; for the limits to which they are allowed to practise in the province. I think this clarifies it a lot better. It brings it into line with accounting practices in

other jurisdictions. I feel that this bill is a decent bill that will help clarify the problems that the three groups have had with each other. I think they're all on board for this, from what I can see.

I hope this will move ahead quickly, and the NDP will be supporting Bill 158.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments or questions?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It was, as always, entertaining to hear the comments from the member for Durham. One wonders whether you should comment on the parts of his speech that were off-topic or the parts that were on-topic. But when it really comes down to it, I kind of like the member from Durham. He's an interesting guy with actually a background in this, so I'm a little disappointed that he didn't dwell in greater detail upon his great depth of experience in the business world, in which he actually could have provided us a little bit of enlightenment.

But let's go back to what the bill is all about. As my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek pointed out rather ably, this is a housekeeping bill that enables all three major accounting bodies—the chartered accountants; the CGAs, the certified general accountants; and the CMAs, the certified management accountants—to, in effect, bring into line their various acts, and to make all of them public and enable each of them to have a modern, accountable and transparent set of rules that enables them, as accounting bodies, to meet their responsibilities to their members, the public and the businesses that they serve, and to do so in a manner befitting 21st-century professions.

It has been my great pleasure over the years to have had a career that, at various times, intertwined with the accounting profession in various places for various reasons. I've always found them a delight to deal with. I have found that when they ask for advice, they generally take it. I've found that their leadership—of all of the bodies—has been enlightened. This, I think, shows that all three bodies have worked together and gotten their act together, and this is good for Ontario in general.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from Halton, the critic for the official opposition, and the always hard-working member from Durham, who I think has set some sort of record for the number of speeches he has made on just about every bill that comes before this Legislature.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Never at a loss for words, Norm.

Mr. Norm Miller: Never at a loss for words. In fact, I'm surprised he didn't use all his time and go right through until 6 o'clock this evening. But he has, of course, a broad base of knowledge on so many different topics.

As it turns out, the certified general accountants are having a reception and day at Queen's Park today, so I did actually go down and try to get some feedback from them on how they feel about Bill 158. Basically, they're all in favour of it, with perhaps some very minor

amendments they'd like to see at committee. Our party, I'm sure, will be supporting this bill and helping it to speed through the Legislature, after it gets through second reading and then goes to committee. I know that our members will take an interest in it at committee and make sure that we hear from the various accounting organizations—the certified management accountants, the CAs and the CGAs—at committee.

1800

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments or questions?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I listened intently to the speech from the member for Durham. Those of you who know the history of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador will recall that at one time they had what they called a narrow-gauge railroad. The train would take off from St. John's and go up hills and down valleys and around rivers and lakes, eventually ending up in the community of Cornerbrook. That was a little like the speech from the member from Durham today. It went up hills, down valleys, around lakes, through creeks, and eventually got to the point where he wanted to be in supporting Bill 158, the act to change the accountants act in the province of Ontario.

I fundamentally respect the member from Durham. Madam Speaker, as you may know, he was born and raised in Peterborough and as a young man left Peterborough to seek his fortune in General Motors, where he spent a long time in various capacities in that organization. He knows the accounting area extremely well from his businesses and he certainly added a few comments.

He indicated that he's having a non-partisan event this Friday in Bowmanville—perhaps I'll get a chance to take it in—to hear those accountants provide their overview of the very important budget that Minister Duncan will deliver at 4 p.m. this Thursday. We certainly wait for that budget to be presented, acknowledging that Ontario in the last number of months has gone through some real economic challenges. It will be the opportunity for the minister to show his leadership and how, over the next period of time, we'll get Ontario back in a balanced budget position, which is something I believe all Ontarians are asking us to do. It will be a credible plan and we look forward to this Thursday.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I appreciate all the members who have commented and I look forward to this legislation going to committee, and some of the suggestions that the member from Halton and myself have made and others—our leader, Tim Hudak, has encouraged us to do the right thing in this important function of audit and accounting in Ontario, and make it strong and transparent, as has been said. I believe that the input today was worthwhile.

With that, Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to respond.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): On March 11, pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Wellington–Halton Hills gave notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Finance concerning the transfer of staff from the Ontario Ministry of Revenue to the Canada Revenue Agency.

The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: In question period on March 11, I asked the government a very simple question. I wanted to know why this government is awarding tax collectors who are moving from the provincial Ministry of Revenue to the Canada Revenue Agency with a six-month severance package, in some cases, even though they may possibly continue to work in the same office and most certainly will not miss a day of work or a day of pay. Essentially, the McGuinty government will pay them up to \$45,000 to change their business cards.

In responding to my supplementary question on that same day, March 11, the Minister of Finance, who was the Acting Premier that same day, gave an answer that was completely unsatisfactory to me and to taxpayers across the province. The minister claimed that tax collectors stand to be handed up to \$45,000 in severance without missing a single day of work because, "The Conservative government introduced that clause into the collective agreement." If he was referring to our present federal Conservative government, as I had initially thought, this statement would have been totally false. This was the reason for my request in the late show. If, however, the minister was referring to a Progressive Conservative provincial government in office in the 1960s, let's say, he may in fact have a point, although, at best, his statement would represent a half truth.

But is this minister really suggesting that his own government's decision to harmonize the PST and the GST is the fault of Premier John Robarts? And even if severance obligations were in fact negotiated in 1970, some 40 years ago, would the minister blame one of our historically great provincial leaders for not envisioning that a future Ontario Premier would break his promises on taxes and harmonize the provincial sales tax with the GST? How absurd would that be?

In fact, the collective agreement that this minister is apparently so determined to defend was intended to protect workers who are losing their jobs. In this case, not a single job will be lost. The minister has only

himself and his government to blame for this mess. If the minister had read the news following my question or listened to the radio, he would know that taxpayers are very upset. They're watching this government fritter away their hard-earned tax dollars so carelessly and without consideration to the context of hardship now affecting so many in our province. The minister's answer failed to even make reference to that reality, just as it failed to assume responsibility for its new sales tax policy, which, of course, is at the root of this problem and created the problem in the first place.

Did this government even bother trying to follow the lead of British Columbia and stop these kinds of outrageous severance payments? Did it even bother trying to negotiate a fair deal for Ontario taxpayers? These are also legitimate questions. All indications are that the government didn't. If it had done so, I'm certain we would have heard about it.

Because the minister apparently sees no problem with his tax collector severance payments, I want to show why the people of Ontario most certainly do see a problem here.

Satinder Chera of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business wrote the following: "As we have seen with some of the major financial institutions south of the border, unreasonably big buyouts only serve to undermine confidence in our public institutions. That our elected officials have to admit that there is anything wrong with paying severance when no jobs are being lost only demonstrates their contempt for average taxpayers and diminishes our hope for the future."

The National Post in an editorial on this issue gave the government an ominous warning: "The next time Ontarians go to the polls, they should remember exactly whom the Liberal government is looking out for—and cast their votes accordingly."

This is from the Waterloo Region Record: "The revelation of this clause damages the reputation of both public employees and their unions. Many Ontarians who have recently lost their jobs will be angered that the government is spending their money in this manner."

Even the Toronto Star, traditionally sympathetic to all things Liberal, featured the issue as its main front-page story on the March 12.

In his response, I hope that the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance will simply acknowledge three incontrovertible facts: first, that people do, in fact, care about this issue—when this government wastes taxpayers' money, especially in this difficult economic environment, it matters to them; second, that this government's own policy, its own conscious and deliberate decision, not a previous government's of more than 40 years ago, is responsible for this payout; third, that this government failed to do what it could have done and fight, just once, for Ontario's taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Pickering–Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

Let me start, if I can, with just acknowledging his comments in respect to severances as part of negotiated agreements set in place by previous governments, including governments of 30 and 40 years ago. Our government honours those agreements. We honour the contractual agreements we have with our employees. That has not always been the case in Ontario, and it wasn't that long ago that governments didn't extend the same courtesies to its employees.

1810

We will reduce our head count within the Ontario public service. This will help us reduce our Ontario public service by a portion of that 5% we're seeking. It will save the Ontario taxpayer \$100 million a year.

But as part of the whole package of tax reform, we did work with the federal government to ensure that those Ontario employees who would lose their jobs with the Ontario government would have an opportunity for employment with the federal government. They are two different governments, a provincial government and a federal government. It's kind of like moving from the Royal Bank to the CIBC. If you leave the Royal Bank and you're entitled to a severance by an agreement you have contractually, you get that severance even if you go to work for the Bank of Commerce subsequently. There really is no distinction between us as a provincial government and our employees, and our obligation to them as part of their negotiated contract to honour those contracts.

I would be surprised if members in this House were to really stand up and say, "What we want you to do is not honour the agreement you have with the public service in this province who do such great work for us." Many of those employees who will be moving to other employment with the federal government will have many years of service in the province of Ontario. They will have served us well. Not to have honoured their contracts would have spoken very badly about government but, also, quite frankly, would have jeopardized any number of activities we're involved in. It certainly would have jeopardized our relationship with our unions, to say the very least.

There are some 1,250 positions which will be impacted by the wind-down of the retail sales tax and the move to the HST. The HST is a federal tax; it's not a provincial tax. They will remit to us our portion of that tax. They will administer the tax. They will manage the tax. They will have the employees who will help them do that. Many of those employees will have been provincial employees until the point where they take on new employment as a result of job offers from the federal government.

We set out this plan to create jobs in the province of Ontario. We have undertaken through this plan, effective July 1 with the HST, to lower taxes, which has already begun with personal income tax. There will be lower corporate taxes. There will be costs related to the HST no doubt, but we set out a strategy to lower taxes in the province, to create a more competitive environment in

this province and create jobs at a time we desperately need them. We expect over the next number of years to see hundreds of thousands of jobs created here in province of Ontario.

Jack Mintz has suggested in his work that up to 600,000 jobs will be created in the next 10 years. We need to take decisive action. Part of that decisive action was this tax plan, including the implementation of the HST. With that implementation, we no longer need, in the employ of the province of Ontario, those 1,250 employees. Those employees have years of service—some many years of service—and their contractual agreements with us entitle them to a payment of a severance.

We're going to honour that obligation to those employees as we undertake to honour our obligations to all of the 60,000-odd employees in the province of Ontario under our responsibility. They will be working for a new employer: the federal government. They will go there without seniority, and the severance packages that they might have been entitled to if they had been federal employees from day one—they'll have to gain that. They'll have to earn that over time. This provides an opportunity for new employment while we reduce our workforce and fulfill our obligations.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Durham has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: As the MPP for the riding of Durham and a former local and regional member of council in the region of Durham, I consider it my privilege and my duty to work with and speak up for the other partners in a municipality and the regional municipality of Durham. In fact, that is the whole point of this question after the sessional day today.

Yesterday, Monday, March 22, there was an article which I will report here. It was entitled "Durham's Planning War." It was in the Toronto Star. The article made a very disparaging case of what I think is kind of a half-hearted approach by the ministry to deal with some very hard work done by the region of Durham staff.

This whole process was in response to a report on the Durham regional official plan, which was adopted on June 3, 2009. This is quite typical of the process that occurs working through approaches, recommendations and actions or responses by the ministry, working with the local staff, as they've done with the amalgamation of York region, as they've done with the city of Hamilton and other areas where there have been official plans submitted. What is different here—and this is really the point and the insulting part of this—as I said, they submitted the plan, after two years of experts and non-politicians for the most part, to the Minister of Municipal

Affairs. So when I saw that report disparaging the work done over two years prior to that submission, I questioned the minister today, and his response was most unsatisfactory, to put it respectfully.

The response from the ministry was received March 12, nine months after the submission had been made. Two years of work; submit the report in June; March 2010, we get the response. The response is most undignified and highly dismissive of the serious work that had been done.

Here's the real point: In all other cases, the public optics on this are completely out of style. In other areas that were done in Barrie and in Hamilton, as I said, these disagreements and discussions and contributions back and forth were done at the staff level. There was no posting or press release. However, in Durham's case, the provincial response was a press release immediately as well as this very, very critical memo of the work done by the regional staff. That's what's at play here. Why the difference? Why is so much attention being paid to this?

What I am most concerned about, as well, is the conformance, amendment 128, requested by the region. They had three or four meetings prior to this submission, and this letter dismisses all of those staff-level meetings. It looks almost like political intervention. Normally there would be an exchange, a give and take, a to and fro on both parts, designated with methodology.

What's really at stake here is that Durham region, in the growth plan, the Places to Grow document, was shortchanged on the number of jobs. The region of Durham is a growing, thriving community. There are economic pressures with the changes in the auto sector. But what has happened here is their plan looked at the guidelines of the province and the Seaton land and other project plans that were out there, and what it did is it looked at the Seaton plan, which was the forecast growth plan up to 2031. They made some recommendations in amendment which resulted in an additional 25,000 jobs. That's up from 350,000 jobs initially to 375,000 jobs by 2031. And they know the area. The director of planning and the staff know the area. Here are some civil servants who have never been to the region, sitting in Toronto and criticizing this plan, only to deny Durham region and the work of the staff and the citizens that went together to create 25,000 additional jobs. They were turned down cold in a press release. It looked to me like it was political intervention at the least and, to me, malicious in the outcome of the work that was done by the professional planners in the region of Durham.

I am dismissive of the response today, and I look for some more clarification.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to be here tonight. We normally don't stay after 6 o'clock, but it is a pleasure.

To make some comments to the member from Durham—because I know he cares about his community and I respect him for that. But I just want to say that the

true meaning of the statement—that was yesterday and today is today.

You know, I was here during question period today when the member posed the question to the minister, and the preamble to the question was the fact that this government is not listening; it's not working with the local municipalities to achieve certain goals. Well, I know the member was here—he was elected, I believe in 1995—during the amalgamation extravaganza that the former government embarked on. I remember one particular AMO convention here in Toronto when the then-Minister of Municipal Affairs instructed the city of Toronto that they'd better get their act together, because he was going to amalgamate them. I was at that time reeve of a municipality, the small, rural municipality of Brighton township, and the whole county's mayors and reeves who were at the convention convened a quick meeting at the Harbour Castle hotel. They were all scared to know when, because—and I believe it was Minister Stockwell at the time? No.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Al Leach, wasn't it?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Al Leach? Well, one of them. I don't want to quote a name, because I could be wrong. So that hasn't happened since then. That's when there was no respect for the municipalities.

To talk about the Durham region OP, I was very fortunate to be parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Infrastructure during the days of discussion when we formed government in 2003—then-Minister Caplan. I'm delighted to say that I played a significant role as parliamentary assistant in the whole greater Golden Horseshoe plan. This wasn't something that this government brought forward; this was actually started by the NDP government in 1990, followed by a lot of consultation; I remember being on municipal council when the Conservative government was in power and carried on

those discussions. I guess we brought, although they used different names, the product as a finished product: the greater Golden Horseshoe plan.

I remember travelling across the greater Golden Horseshoe region and beyond in consultation. It was probably one of our most extensive pieces of legislation. I heard over and over again from those municipal leaders, those planners across the region—and I probably attended a good majority of those consultations and open houses with Minister Caplan—that that was something that municipalities were asking for: leadership within the province to come up with a long-term strategy for some regional planning. Because frankly, I know from being mayor and a member of council for our small municipality in Northumberland county, we all tended to do our own thing. We forgot sometimes that we had neighbours next door who had the same network of roads and bridges we shared. Sometimes there was very little consultation.

So to say that Durham region was not well-consulted or represented I think is not correct. On this proposal that Durham region put forward, in my understanding, there's not unanimous consent from regional council. I know we have to respect democracy and the majority gets their wish, but I can tell you and you know that sometimes when we travel the stretch of 401 across the city of Toronto—I remember when it was two lanes. I remember some farmers' fields. I hear people comment: "I wish better planning was done." Well, I think that's what the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe talked about, and I think it's our future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1824.

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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
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Qadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
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Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
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Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
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Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature



**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 24 March 2010

Mercredi 24 mars 2010

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Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 March 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 mars 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010

SUR LES PROFESSIONS COMPTABLES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 23, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 158, An Act to repeal and replace the statutes governing The Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario, the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario and The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario / Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à abroger et à remplacer les lois régissant l'Association des comptables généraux accrédités de l'Ontario, les Comptables en management accrédités de l'Ontario et l'Institut des comptables agréés de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: This isn't the most enviable spot in the speaking lineup; you know that, don't you? At 9 a.m., folks are not exactly tuned in in large numbers. I prefer the afternoon slot, but this is the luck of the draw.

As a matter of fact, I'm being accommodated by the government House leader and other members, because the government House leader, to her great delight—this is the lead on behalf of the New Democrats that I'm doing here—knows that I have a time constraint imposed upon me, because there's a House leaders' meeting at 9:45. So this is one of those, albeit rare, occasions where I'm not going to be able to utilize my full 60 minutes.

First, I want to apologize to the parliamentary assistant, because I wasn't able to be here yesterday when the minister and he did the government lead on this. I regret that, because I think it's truly important that opposition critics should be present for the leads by the government and for the leads by their parallel critics in other caucuses, at the very least. It's a convention that I was taught many years ago, and one that I think is very valuable.

From time to time, I have been critical of PAs—never of Mr. Zimmer, but perhaps of some the more newly elected ones, who don't understand that protocol in terms of being present for the carriage or the pursuit of their bills through the Legislature. But I did read the Hansard

transcript of both Attorney General Bentley's and Mr. Zimmer's comments. And I'm not just saying that; I'm going to prove it, because I'm going to make several references to them during the course of my comments.

I do commend the parliamentary assistant, the member for Willowdale, whom I consider an outstanding member of this Legislature—extremely capable, especially in contrast to the motley assembly of mountebanks he is surrounded by.

With respect to Bill 158, I think I can say with some real certainty—I suspect we're going to vote on this this morning; I also indicated to the government House leader that our second reading debate on this was not going to be lengthy. We're going to support the bill on second reading; it's important to get this bill into committee. Committee hearings are not going to be lengthy; I suspect, and I shouldn't predict this, that there's not going to be phone call after phone call to the clerk's office by members of the public wanting to be heard on this bill, although I suspect there are a few issues with respect to this bill that may prompt public concerns, should the public ever become aware of it. But what I'm trying to put is that of 107 members here, I think I can safely predict that at least five, and probably no more than five, have read this bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: You only have to read a third of it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. O'Toole says you only have to read a third of it. That's the problem: Only reading a third of it, you miss the other two thirds and some things that should be considered that I'm going to be pointing out.

So I say this is one of those bills that, out of 107 members, I suspect five members have read, and that may be generous. That causes me some concern as well, because I don't think that's particularly unique to this piece of legislation.

I do want to thank the Ministry of the Attorney General staff for giving me a briefing on the bill and responding to my questions with respect to the bill. They were helpful in that regard, as civil service persons always are.

The bill deals with three accounting bodies: the CGAs, the CAs and the CMAs. Yesterday, Mr. Zimmer talked about how there was some sort of recognition by all branches of the profession, as he put it in Hansard, that it's time to move forward. I've got to remind him and members of this assembly that the chartered accountants in Ontario were dragged kicking and screaming into this new regime.

I was so pleased that it was the New Democrats who forced the issue and in fact forced the vote on the bill that

brought CGAs into the public accounting realm. Everybody was promising it to CGAs, but nobody was really going to deliver it. Successive governments had told CGAs, "Oh, no problem. Just stick with us, bear with us, and we'll bring you into the public accounting regime." But it never happened, and it wasn't going to happen that time, either. But I was proud to be here with Howard Hampton. There was a little bit of parliamentary pettifoggery going on at the time, but nonetheless, the results were good, because what happened at the end of the day was that the government was forced/embarrassed—I wouldn't say tricked, but they were drawn into a vote they never intended to participate in. You were here; I think you'll recall that momentous day.

I do want to mention, while we're talking about accountants, that as I was preparing for this morning I couldn't help but reflect on Bill Spicer down in Welland. Bill was an accountant there; he was both a CA and CGA. He was a newcomer—he came from Warton many, years ago—and quickly become a Wellander, a Crowlander. Bill died a couple of weeks ago. Extremely popular, extremely well known, he was the little man's—the little person's—accountant. He took care of businesses of all sorts, but quickly identified with the south-end community.

0910

I was at the Lincoln Plaza getting my licence stickers for my 1995 Chevy S10 pickup, which is running beautifully, and Louis Pelino was sitting there in his pickup. Of course, everybody knows Louis Pelino. He was a police officer in the old Crowland police force and ran the Pelino-Matya scrapyard. But he was also a stellar hockey player in the 1950s until he had a back injury. In fact, when he stopped, he asked, "Hey Pete, what's going on with the back?" So we shared back stories. His, of course, was 60 years old; mine was just a couple of years old—a different world and different technology.

We reminisced about Bill Spicer. Bill, amongst other things, was a member of the Welland Athletic and Benevolent Association. These are people who do good works. A lot of them have backgrounds in athletics and sports—hockey players and baseball players. Louis Pelino was a hockey player. They're famous for their annual \$60 all-you-can-eat, all-you-can drink dinner at the Croatian hall.

I don't know if you do that in big cities like Toronto, but these are common—the Auberge Richelieu does it. Louis Pelino's Welland Athletic and Benevolent Association hold these. Again, you've got to be on a waiting list to get tickets, to be in the lineup for tickets. Of course, there are draws; I'm sure they're licensed. It's all the steak, and at the Croatian hall, all the holubsti—cabbage rolls—and smoked sausage and so on that you can eat.

I just wanted to reflect on Bill Spicer, who's just an outstanding guy, a great family person, who gave a great deal to his community. When I'm talking about Bill 158, one of the things that I think the government has overlooked in a very dramatic and serious way is that there are accountants and there are accountants. Again, we're

talking about small town versus Toronto, versus Bay Street right down the road here. We're talking about accountants.

My accountant, Ray Tisi—a young guy—and his wife, Vivian, run their small accounting firm. He's a chartered accountant and he does my income tax returns and answers questions I ask him. He's just a brilliant, capable guy. As a matter of fact, his son Justin Tisi was a page here back 10, 11 years ago.

He's got a small office on East Main Street, down by Lyons Avenue at East Main. It's an old house that has been turned into an office, very common in small-town Ontario. He is just an outstanding, capable professional.

But then you've got the guys at the Arthur Andersens of the world, don't you? You've got the guys working in the KPMGs. You have the people who were accomplices—accomplices? They were the authors of the Enrons of the world.

While some people went to jail, I dare say that there are a whole lot more that should have. Conrad Black is lonely, I'm sure. Unfortunately, the United States is more inclined to send people like this to jail. The jails they get sent to—I only wish Conrad Black could have done his pretrial time over at the old Don. I would have been so pleased to read his columns after a couple weeks at the old Don. Oh, yeah.

Even a few months in the Haven, in Millhaven, would, I'm sure, have changed his literary style or at least his literary content, if he was even capable of working the keyboard. Nonetheless, he's in this spa down in Florida. The only saving grace is that we hope that the guy never gets allowed back into Canada because, of course, convicted felons shouldn't be allowed into the country, should they? He's not a citizen because he relinquished that, the arrogant—I was going to use a profane reference to the maternity of Mr. Black, but of course that wouldn't be parliamentary, because it wouldn't be a quote but something I concocted on my own.

We've got two types of accountants here. Interestingly again, the parliamentary assistant, in his comments yesterday, talked about the motivation. I'm not imputing motive here; I'm not making an allegation. I'm talking about the acknowledged motive—far different. That's in perfect compliance with the standing orders, Speaker.

Look, I know the parliamentary assistant. I know him to be an honourable, extremely intelligent, extremely capable person, for whom I have affection and a great deal of respect. I also know that he's paid reasonably well—not as much as he could make out in the private sector, but paid reasonably well—to do his job. And his job is to read the scripts in a manner that the PA is expected to spin a particular piece of government legislation.

This one isn't, at first blush, a particularly controversial piece of legislation. It appears that it's not contentious at all. Let me tell you what the parliamentary assistant said yesterday—you were here; you heard. He said, "There was a recognition that the essential thing to get right here was the correct balance."

Hold the quotes there for a minute, Hansard, because, you see, “balance” is always an interesting word when it’s used by the government. As a matter of fact, people in disputes with their spouses say, “Let’s have some balance here.” What that means is, “Let me prevail.” Right? “Let’s be balanced about this” really means “Let me have my way.”

Going back to the quotes—this is on page 236 of yesterday’s Hansard. It’s reference 1630; those are the reference numbers we have in Hansard: “There was a recognition that the essential thing to get right here was the correct balance between the needs of the accounting profession, speaking generally; the needs of each of the three branches of the accounting profession and”—as if some sort of afterthought, some sort of “Oh nuts, we’re supposed to mention this”—“the public interest,” as if it was some sort of add-on, like some tacky Canadian Tire accessory for your car, maybe one of those spinners for the steering wheel or an air freshener to hang on the rear-view mirror. Just an afterthought: Oh yes, by the way, “the public interest.”

Well, isn’t the regulation of these types of professions, which can have so much impact on the day-to-day lives of ordinary folks and, as we’ve learned so dramatically in the course of the last few years, on the economy of not just a region but of the whole world—Enron could only have occurred with the complicity of accountants. Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae: the atrocious collapse of those major financial operators in the States could only have happened—CIBC paid out a big chunk of money on those deals, didn’t they, and cost their shareholders a chunk of dough.

Mutual fund holders—people like your folks, my folks, your grand folks—worked hard, saved a little bit of money and were convinced by some bank mutual fund seller or, even more dramatically, somebody who picks up trailer fees on what they sell and whose motivation for selling that stuff then becomes more suspect, right? Talk about another unregulated industry: the mutual fund industry. Oh, it’s regulated—self regulation. I’m going to get to self-regulation in just a minute.

But this crisis over the last two years couldn’t have happened without the complicity, the aiding and abetting, the actual engineering by accountants. I say to you, Parliamentary Assistant—through you, Speaker, of course—that public interest should have been number one. Public interest should have been the overriding principle when it came to the drafting of this legislation.

0920

I hope I have enough time. The government House leader has imposed an arbitrary limit on the length of my speech by virtue of her House leaders’ meeting that I’m compelled to attend at 9:45, but there’s always committee and there’s always third reading debate. New Democrats will be forcing this bill to committee, make no mistake about it. We will be forcing this bill to committee, make no mistake about it. Because one of the other remarkable observations made on behalf of the government—because once again, the parliamentary assistant, who is a

fine person, who is a person of good character, who is a person who is well regarded not just here but outside of here and is a person of principle, I’m confident may not necessarily write his own speeches when it comes to the lead speech as parliamentary assistant on a bill that he has carriage of. And of course, we’re honest people in here. One of the reasons why we can’t accuse another member of lying is because no member should lie. So if there’s a rebuttal to that, I would expect it to be in compliance with parliamentary convention.

It remains that one of the other observations, justifications, rationalizations, explanations offered up by the parliamentary assistant was modernization. I’m not sure about that. Ah, but harmonization—harmonization with what? Because the reality is that if you check appendix A and compare it to appendix B and then compare that to appendix C, one applying to certified general accountants, one appendix applying to chartered accountants, and one appendix applying to certified management accountants, you will find that they’re not identical, that they contain some very different provisions. Oh, at their core they appear to create uniformity, but upon inspection there is some significant variation. And it’s a variation that, I say to you, Speaker, goes directly to this government’s abandonment and betrayal of public interest. It may come as a surprise to folks even in here.

Let’s take a look at section 26, for instance, of appendix A, which applies to all three of these respective groups.

I ask the government House leader, if we’re getting close to 9:45, will you please signal me or send a note over?

I ask folks to look at section 26, which applies to all three of the groups. All that this government is prepared to do is to regulate the use of the title “certified general accountant” or the title, in the companion appendix B, “certified management accountant,” or in appendix C, “chartered accountant” or the initials.

Anybody in this province can call themselves an accountant, can put up a shingle saying “accountant,” can promote themselves as an accountant, can charge fees for being an accountant. That’s where we’re going. Let’s leave Bay Street for just a minute, although it’s hard to leave it with those gangsters and thieves looming over our shoulders and shadowing us from their 30th-floor offices.

Tax preparation: I was shocked but not surprised to read Ellen Roseman’s column in this morning’s Star about the gouging that tax preparers, many of whom call themselves accountants, are charging for tax returns. Ellen Roseman, Toronto Star, March 24, 2010:

“Marilyn Hew pays \$40 to have her tax returns prepared by Can-Cro Accounting, Bookkeeping and Tax Services in Toronto each year.

“But since she was claiming a home renovation tax credit, she had to pay \$94 this year. The extra charge amounted to 15% of the tax credit she will receive.”

These scoundrels, these thieves, are charging her a percentage of her return. They’re referring to themselves as

an accounting operation, and they're entirely unregulated. What a lost opportunity on the part of Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals to protect people like Marilyn Hew.

If one suspects or wants to believe that that's an isolated incident, why, it was only two days ago—I checked my emails once again this morning. My staff down at the constituency office in Welland, Mike Haines—all of us probably have good staff. I'm sure we have good staff in our constituency offices. Lord knows they're the ones who do the heavy lifting. Just think about it: They've got people lined up in the morning before they open, and the lineup never ends all day. I'm sure our office isn't unique. There are still people there at 4:30 or 5 who they have to accommodate, which means they don't leave until 5:30 or 6. We are guaranteed, here at Queen's Park, a lunch hour, along with other rather lax timetables. Why, as I look around, I observe the laxness of some of the people's timetables, not because they're here but because I see the green backs of these wonderful leather chairs.

It was a few years ago that our constituency office went after and nailed to the wall a tax preparation firm that was gouging seniors. Seniors, as you know, are vulnerable to these sorts of scams because they tend to be trusting. They also tend not to report because they tend to be embarrassed about being scammed, which is why seniors are so often the targets of scams.

So here we go. Let's understand: This legislation does nothing to control the use of the appellation "accountant," or the title. I think that's a very dangerous thing. It controls the use of "chartered accountant," "certified management accountant," "certified general accountant" and the initials. It says that only those people who, in fact, can do that are entitled to use those. But anybody can call themselves an accountant, and the public, frankly, is hard-pressed to know—and we are hard-pressed to expect them to know—the difference.

One of the other interesting things is that the government—and to be fair, the parliamentary assistant addressed the issue of foreign-trained accountants. I find it remarkable, truly, truly, remarkable, I find it astounding, I find it just unbelievable—oh, but I believe it; the use of the word "unbelievable" in this instance is mere hyperbole—that the government has neglected foreign-trained accountants. I'm talking specifically about British-trained accountants, who are perfectly capable, and nobody disputes their skills—and these are members of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

0930

You see, when the parliamentary assistant, on behalf of the government, not on his own behalf, stands up here on a private member's—he had a wonderful private member's bill, the drunk driving boating bill, that passed, that became law. He leveraged the government a little bit; he appeared on Andy Barrie's show. The people in the Premier's office were bouncing off the walls; the government House leader of the day was fit to be tied. I thought it was rather mischievous myself, but not something that I was above doing in my own right. And the

parliamentary assistant had another private member's bill, the regulation of private zoos bill, which never really became law, because the existing amendments that we dealt with don't really regulate private zoos; they still flourish out there. I was supportive of the parliamentary assistant.

The parliamentary assistant says the government has to balance—listen to this—the interests of foreign-trained accountants with the interests of potential Ontario clients of accountants to rely on the qualifications and oversight of their bodies. Parliamentary assistant, I know that wasn't your idea. But shame on you for using such weasel words when it comes to foreign-trained professionals.

On the one hand, this government wants to be known as the champion of foreign-trained professionals. What was that crummy cliché in the throne speech the other day? "Ontario needs the world and the world needs Ontario"—a tautology if I ever heard one. That was as good as they got: "Ontario needs the world and the world needs Ontario." Well, Ontario doesn't appear to need British-trained accountants.

I'm told that the CGA as a body goes back to the early 1980s—correct me if I'm wrong. The CAs are the oldest body. They go back many decades. But I bet you dollars to doughnuts—I'm not really a gambling man. Well, I buy the occasional lottery ticket. Heck, politics is a gamble, isn't it? Elected office is a gamble. But by and large, I'm not a gambling man. I'm not a big fan of casinos—nor is the member for St. Catharines, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and I give him credit for that.

The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants has a history that is at least as long as that of chartered accountants in Ontario. I'm not sure of that. All I know is that it has 300,000 members and students in 160 countries, it's headquartered in London, with staffed offices as an association in 31 countries, and they are being told that their members, although they're quite capable of practising as accountants because they're—well, they're accountants; nobody denies that. But they're being told that they can't put the letters behind their name of "ACCA," unlike a certified general accountant, who can put "CGA"; unlike a chartered accountant, who can put "CA"; and unlike a management accountant who can put "CMA," because the public will be confused?

Heck, as if it isn't already confusing enough. The fact is, people don't rely upon those initials. I know some professions—oh, the insurance industry. Have you ever seen the letterhead of some of those insurance guys, those insurance brokers? They've got letters; they've got to use two lines from all these little institutes that they belong to and courses that they take. They think it makes an impression.

The other thing that really bugs me is Ph.D.s who call themselves "doctor." Those are pompous people. Doctors on this continent are medical doctors; Ph.D.s are Ph.D.s. If you want to call yourself "Joan Smith, Ph.D.," go ahead, though to what extent or to what end, I don't know. But call yourself "doctor"? No. A doctor is a medical doctor or a dentist.

So somehow, the government is worried that putting "ACCA" after your name is going to confuse people, that somehow people are going to think maybe you're a chartered accountant or maybe you're a certified general accountant or maybe you're a certified management accountant. I, on behalf of New Democrats, resent this abandonment of these foreign-trained professionals—because I was told there are more than a few of them working here in the province of Ontario and across the country. This is the sort of xenophobic ethnocentrism that we've inherited from our American neighbours. University degrees, right? We make people from other countries jump through hoops to justify their degrees, yet many of them went to universities that were operating in full force before this country was even settled. It's true. And they've got this fabulous reputation. But as I say, it's that xenophobic ethnocentrism. Maybe I'm being naive and just not owning up to it, but I insist we inherited it from our American neighbours. Maybe it's a very Canadian thing in its own right; I don't know. So we've got something to say, come committees, around the exclusion of those good women and men working as ACCAs.

I want to deal with two more things, and I've to do this oh, so quickly—and I regret this, having to do it quickly—but what about notice to the public? How is the public supposed to know if you've got a bad accountant or a good one? Because it's only in the legislation affecting CGAs that the regulatory body may publish the results of disciplinary hearings. In the other two appendices, there are no statutory authorities for publishing disciplinary proceedings and disciplinary consequences. Hell's bells, these disciplinary proceedings should be as public as they are for doctors. Accountants impact on people's lives, on the economic lives of people, on the economies of provinces, of countries, of continents. It seems to me that there should not only be a requirement—not just a statutory provision that "may publish," because that's what it says with respect to CGAs, but "shall publish," and it should apply to all of the respective accounting bodies. "Shall"—mandatory. The public has a right to know if an accountant is cleared of an allegation. The public has a right to know if an accountant is found culpable of a breach and of having displayed professional misconduct.

We've got to wrap up. I'm looking forward to committee. Oh, and by reference for folks, that was subsection 36(7) that I was referring to, appendix A. I know people will be reaching for their copies of the act and studying that thoroughly within moments of me finishing this modest contribution to the debate and heading off to the House leaders' meeting.

0940

Now I want to go to section 44, so fast. "A member of the association"—again we're referring to CGAs in this instance. I'm reading from that appendix A—"is incapacitated ... if, by reason of physical or mental illness, condition or disorder, other infirmity or addiction to or excessive use of alcohol or drugs, he or she is incapable of meeting his or her obligations under this act."

Will Rahim Jaffer ever be able to identify himself as an accountant pursuant to this section? I don't know. He walked. Maybe that bag of blow was powdered sugar, but you would have thought that if he was accused of being a cokehead, the first thing he would have said upon walking out of that courtroom was, "It was only sugar." Maybe some day, Helena Guergis will tell us what in fact happened. She's the one who had, as Richard Brennan put it, the "hissy fit"—not me; Richard Brennan, the journalist, called it the "hissy fit"—at the Charlottetown airport, where she, as a federal member of Parliament, expressed horror about having been stuck—and I suspect that her wording could have been sanitized in the translation—in this "hell hole." She's a federal member of Parliament. For Pete's sake, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island: Good grief. It's one of the most beautiful places in Canada. What the heck has Helena Guergis got against Anne of Green Gables? What has she got against red soil, good folks, lobster, great hospitality, and one of the prettiest, most beautiful spots? How dare she, when PEI is constitutionally guaranteed four members of the federal Parliament, notwithstanding their population—PEI has some clout. So maybe some day Helena Guergis will explain away the coke—and I'm not talking Pepsi—with respect to Jaffer.

I just find it remarkable that you could be addicted to alcohol or drugs, fair enough, and be excluded only if you are incapacitated. You can be an addict and not be incapacitated. For the life of me, I don't know how some meth-head—I guess they can do income tax returns real fast; speed up the production rate. I'm not sure about the accuracy—or just excessive. So if you do a little bit of meth, if you do a little bit of cocaine, if you do a little bit of heroin, you're okay; you're clear. But you have to be incapacitated by excessive drug or alcohol use.

Just weird stuff—just silly stuff. Why don't disciplinary bodies—because, you see, the list of offences is not contained in the statute. This is strange, this government's obsession with private-dominated/public partnerships, because that's really what they are. There was never such a thing as a private/public partnership that didn't result in the taxpayer having their pocket picked. Go all the way back to SkyDome, if you want to. Never mind the 407 and any number of hospitals that are being built, with high, high profit for the private sector financing, all at the expense of health care.

My time is almost up. The government House leader is getting ready for a House leaders' meeting. She's going to be sitting there tapping her pencil on the desk as I arrive late, as she's wont to, because she simply doesn't overlook any opportunity to criticize me or to chastise me. If she needs a whipping boy, I've got big enough shoulders, and I've been whipped by the best. I've been with the New Democrats at Queen's Park since the days of Bob Rae, the last Liberal Premier that we had, so I've been whipped by the best.

But I want to say: Look, let's get this bill into committee. I want to hear from the British-trained and British-certified accountants. I want to hear from the parliament-

ary assistant, to explain some of the omissions and oversights in this legislation, and just maybe the bill can be approved. Are we anywhere close to the Pareto optimal now? I don't think so. Will committee achieve that for us? I'm highly skeptical, but I'm prepared to try on behalf of New Democrats.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I've got two minutes. I just want to touch on a couple of things that the member opposite just spoke on. First of all, he used the expression that the CAs were dragged, kicking and screaming, to participate in this piece of legislation. I think that's a slur on the profession and that the member ought to apologize to the profession for that.

As I said yesterday in my remarks, since October 2003, I have worked with the CAs, the CGAs and the CMAs, and first and foremost in their negotiations and in their participation in this exercise was how best to protect the public interest. The member opposite does a disservice to the fine tradition in Ontario of the self-regulated professions, be it the accounting profession, the medical profession, the engineering profession, the nursing profession or other self-regulating professions. Without the integrity, the hard work and the recognition of the public interest that each of those self-regulating professions brings to the work that they do in the province, the civil society that we have in Ontario would be a lot poorer for it. It's because of their efforts here in Ontario that we have one of the highest standards in the world, if not the highest standard in the world, of civil society. The rule of law, principled public debate, majority and minority rights: Those are all elements of the public interest. It's the self-regulating professions that play an enormous role in that regard.

I want to say that in my remarks yesterday—I have a copy of Hansard, and I counted up: "Public interest" was mentioned more than eight times.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: We all sit and listen in wonder, sometimes, to the member from Welland. He has great experience and he brings a great deal of commitment to the task. The respect that he showed in terms of attending while the parliamentary assistant, the minister and the critic spoke, is a compliment to his understanding of the process here in the Legislature.

A couple of things: He did take a bit of a small swipe here. What I said was that the report, basically, is broken into three sections, and each section is identical except that it refers to a different accounting group. I'm going to give you an example of that to prove that this is the case. If you read under any one of the three accounting organizations, one of the objectives—and number 4 is a good one. It says here, "To promote and protect the public interest by governing and regulating the practice of individuals and firms as certified management accountants in accordance with this act and the bylaws, including"—and it goes on to list. But if you look at the next sec-

tion—there are three sections, A, B and C, and I'm looking at C, which is the chartered accountants—it says, "To promote and protect the public interest by governing and regulating the practice of individuals and firms as chartered accountants." So the words are basically identical in each of the sections, with very, very minor modifications.

Now, the last part—he digressed, unfortunately and uncharacteristically, to criticize federal elected members without having full knowledge of all that transpired, accusing them here of using cocaine or meth and all the inappropriate—I'm not sure what it had to do with the bill or with his displaying his own dignity or lack of it in this Legislature. So I am surprised and a little bit disappointed by the member from Welland, but at the end of the day, he means well, and not one of us here is free of criticism.

0950

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To be fair, let's all agree that when the member from Welland rises in this House, the usually abysmal ratings of this place get a great bump up. Come on. He is one of the best orators in this place. He keeps us engaged; he keeps us amused. Not only that, but he does his homework, and he did his homework on this bill. He looked at the various provisions and he made some absolutely thoughtful comments that I hope will be taken to committee.

As the small business critic, normally a shadow portfolio, I notice that there is no Minister of Small Business over there in the cabinet any more. I think that says a great deal—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Were you referring to attendance or just the position?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm referring to the absence of a small business minister in the new cabinet. I think that says a great deal. When the member from Welland talked about the distance from Bay Street to Main Street, the problems on Main Street not being the problems on Bay Street, and that this government is a government for Bay Street and not Main Street, nothing could speak to that more accurately than the fact that they do not even have a Minister of Small Business any more. That's distressing to me. I think that's distressing to the people in the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas who came to Queen's Park, 80% of whose members object to the HST, who came here and were ignored by the government. They represent tens of thousands of small businesses. Small businesses are hurting. They are not getting the tax breaks because they don't make the profits. They've been suffering during the recession, and many of them are trained accountants. The member from Welland talked about one; a shout out to my own nephew, John DiNovo, who's one. They're busy doing taxes right now. They are doing our taxes. We need to help them.

Again, certainly the member from Welland brought up some excellent points. I look forward to committee, and I

look forward to hearing the voice of small business at least there, if not here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jacek: It certainly is a pleasure to make a few comments on the remarks made by our colleague from Welland—always entertaining, always instructive. A few words today were used that probably had us reaching for our dictionaries: “tautology,” “xenophobia,” and of course there’s fulsome—to use another of his favourite words—praise of our colleague from Willowdale. It’s very much deserved, as the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General and very instrumental in this particular bill.

Of course, it’s so good to hear that the member from Welland and his party are going to be supporting Bill 158. It certainly does provide great clarity, I think, for just about everybody. I know that for myself, understanding the differences, responsibilities and skill sets of CAs, CGAs and CMAs has been something that I’ve continued to learn about. We were visited yesterday by, in fact, the CGAs here at the Legislature and heard their particular issues and of course the fact, as my colleague from Parkdale–High Park has referenced, that they really do serve small business. This is their primary interest.

The York region chapter of the CGAs is particularly active. I had the pleasure of joining them for their annual golf tournament last summer. They had the wonderful sense to use a golf course in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, and again it was a very good opportunity to understand the issues facing their profession. So it’s good to see this act in front of us. It’s certainly a good step forward and I’m hoping that everyone will be supportive of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is always a pleasure and a challenge to follow my esteemed colleague from Welland, who, as some who have responded to his comments pointed out, is never less than interesting and is indeed one of the orators that all of us, when we were first elected back in 2003, looked to. We learned some of the don’ts from the member from Welland, and we learned a few of the dos. We learned some of the intricacies and indeed the pitfalls of parliamentary procedure from the member from Welland. For that I have to say that the Ontario Legislature is always an interesting place when the member from Welland is in it.

I also want to acknowledge the contributions of my colleague from Willowdale, who is certainly one of the bright legal minds that exist in the government caucus. His contributions here are always thorough and well researched. He has been, for all of us, a calming steady influence, a great guy to know and a solid contributor to the province of Ontario over the last seven years and, if I may say so, someone who I call a good friend.

There’s something the previous speaker brought up that I think was a bit of a red herring. I think we need to refer to the act itself to correct it. He talked about others

who were not chartered accountants, CAs; certified general accountants, CGAs; or certified management accountants, CMAs. I’m going to quote from schedule C clause 2 of the revised Chartered Accountants Act. This pretty much answers the member’s objections; I’ll just read it directly: “This act does not affect or interfere with the right of any person who is not a member of the institute to practise as an accountant.” Similar phrasing exists in the other two acts, those that govern the CMAs and the CGAs.

What the member’s objections were, I wasn’t entirely sure but, as he says, this bill can go to committee, and he can ask at committee. I’m sure that at committee representatives of all three bodies can look at the member from Welland and say, “This doesn’t interfere in any way with the freedom of any other person to call themselves an accountant, but they can’t call themselves a chartered accountant or a certified general accountant or a certified management accountant.” Those designations remain protected.

What this bill does is, in consultation with the members of all three bodies, it takes the articles that govern the three professions and, by and large, makes them the same set of rules and regulations and policies and procedures. It means that transparency is increased. It means that simplicity is enhanced. It means that for a man or a woman who chooses to become either a CA, a CMA or a CGA, the standards by which they’ll be governed during the time that they practise their profession are the same, regardless of what brand of accounting training they choose. It should be pointed out that the accounting training is very rigorous. Throughout it, its principle purpose is the protection of the public and the integrity of the client. One could pick just about any section of the three because, by and large, they read pretty much the same.

I know, Speaker, that you’ve had a very distinguished career as a CGA and have been recognized by the profession for your contributions both here in the Legislature and during the time that you practised. I certainly, on behalf of all of us who have the ongoing pleasure and privilege of your company, want to acknowledge you, Speaker, for your contributions that stem from your experience in dealing with other people’s and other firms’ money and your knowledge of the trends and the rhythms and flows in the management of money, and the difference that it makes, when you come into government, that we’ve got someone in caucus who actually does understand money.

We’re actually privileged, certainly, on both sides of the House to have people who understand some of the rhythms and the flows of money as well. For example, I know that my esteemed colleague from Durham has a long history in business and is also able to bring to the fore some of his business experience, which also makes the House a better place. Also, in the spirit of this being March, he’s also Irish. What more can you ask?

To look at the objectives of the difference institutes, one sees in looking at the act that they remain either the

same or obviously very compatible. In looking at such things as “to promote and increase the knowledge, skill and proficiency of members of the institute, firms and students,” it allows all three accounting bodies to promulgate the same set of good practices among their members.

1000

I’m familiar with some of the things that the CAs do—less so with the CGAs and the CMAs—and I know that some of the best practices in professional development are those that I’ve seen practised by the three accounting bodies. The expectations of your institute, regardless of which of the three you have the privilege of working within as an accountant, are that on an ongoing basis you’ll continue to keep your skills current, because the laws and the statutes under which you practice the tax code that you interpret are living bodies of law and they change. It means that as an accountant, it’s incumbent on you to make sure that you’re offering to your clients or to your employer the very best quality of financial advice.

To that end, all three institutes are very proactive and very assertive with their members in their expectations that they’re going to, each and every year, undertake so many days—and I don’t remember the exact numbers for each institute, but the expectation is there that you’re going to continue your education, and that each and every year, you’re going to stay current with your profession and stay up-to-date with the body of law that dictates the practice of accounting. That sort of thing says to someone who is an employer or a client that this is a profession that, when it confers that designation upon a man or a woman and makes them a member, is ensuring on your behalf that, to the limit of their ability, they’re going to make sure that you get the best quality advice that they can possibly give you and that the advice that you get is going to stay up-to-date. That, indeed, is how it should be.

I remember back, now nearly four years, when we began the work under our government of the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act. At the time, the then-minister, the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, who undertook a very extensive series of consultations, found that, by and large, the accounting professions were examples of how to do it right. If you came to Canada from another country, our objective in that exercise was to ensure that you obtained the ability to take your portfolio of qualifications and experience that you had earned in another country or at another time, and in a manner that was cost-effective, fair and transparent, convert that to its Canadian equivalent.

We had some examples of professions that had to be pushed and prodded into doing this, but one thing that became apparent very early on is that the best practices lay under the umbrella of the three accounting bodies. They did a good job, and I think they should be recognized for that. They continue to do a good job.

The legislation sets out some of the governance that the three institutes must operate under. It sets out who is going to comprise the council that governs the institute. It

talks about the terms that the officers serve and the process of reappointing. It sets out a series of committees and it allows the institutes to establish a fair, transparent and open framework, under which men and women who call themselves CAs, CGAs or CMAs know that their institute is staying up to date; that their members can get involved in the affairs of the institute; that they can serve on a committee and shape the future of their profession; and that the process of staying up to date and relevant, and the process of providing the best possible service to employers, clients and their own members, is a process that they themselves, as members, can have access to, that it isn’t closed to them, that the selection process is set out in very clear black and white, and that it stays in touch with the times.

The advantages to our province of having, in this case, many tens of thousands of men and women who have qualified for a designation in accounting and who can practise it in fairness and responsibility, reflect on the ability of Ontario companies to run a good operation, to stay in compliance with federal and provincial statutes, to report to their owners and shareholders and to manage things responsibly on behalf of their employees.

Part of the reason companies come here to Ontario is that in addition to the many other things Ontario can offer them, such as an excellent, well-developed infrastructure of electricity, roads, water; excellent access to the United States market—which is still the largest market in the world, but you can get access to that right here in the province of Ontario—companies that come to the province of Ontario are also able to get their fundamental natural resource right here, and that natural resource is smart people. One thing we have in Ontario is the post-secondary infrastructure to train and equip knowledge workers to be able to go out and serve their clients, employers, customers, neighbourhoods and communities. Among those are our financial people, and if any of the other professions really want to see an example of good governance and best practices, the three accounting bodies are usually a very, very good starting point.

To briefly go through some of the clauses in this bill: Among the things that the bill does is it talks about what a firm of accountants is. We take it for granted that someone might work for such-and-such a firm, but this bill standardizes and harmonizes just what constitutes an accounting firm within the text of the bill. That provides clarity for anyone who chooses to start a firm, and it provides clarity for firms that want to combine or merge.

It’s actually very common practice for firms predominantly of one designation to employ people who have another designation. For example, with some of the CA firms, one often finds CMAs and CGAs who work there as employees and managers.

In this vein, I’d like to recount a few personal things. It’s been my pleasure through my working life to have it constantly entwined in one form or another with, particularly, the chartered accountants. I’d like to recognize and thank one of my early clients from when I practised public relations in British Columbia: the Institute of Char-

tered Accountants of British Columbia. I got to know the accounting profession very well out there, and I met some great gentlemen along the way.

I would especially recognize, if he ever reads the *Hansard*—and I'm sure he's not watching this—a former Auditor General of Canada, and the first president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of British Columbia that I ever served: Ken Dye.

He was followed by a gentleman who became and remained a personal friend for quite a number of years: Ron Park, who was a fine, capable man, who really took the Institute of Chartered Accountants of British Columbia into the modern era during the term of his presidency and implemented many enduring and far-ranging reforms.

We all had a lot of fun together, and I'd like to think that we did some good things together in British Columbia.

I would also like to mention S+C Partners out in Meadowvale, with whom I have a continuing friendship. Every Friday morning at 7:30, we have ice time out at Meadowvale 4 Rinks, and it's my personal pleasure and privilege to go out and get a little bit of exercise playing goal with the boys. To Kalin McDonald, Steve Myers and all the rest of them: Greetings from the Ontario Legislature, and it's been a pleasure to work for you.

The government that I have the privilege and responsibility of serving has a long history of transparency in some of the legislation that, over the years, we've enacted: such things as the Apology Act, which allows people to apologize for a mistake or a wrongdoing without fear that the apology might be used in civil litigation against them, and the Election Act, in which Ontario introduced fixed-date elections to Ontario and eliminated, to a large extent, political considerations as a factor in determining when people go to the polls. Indeed, in the same bill Ontario further strengthened our system by preserving the 11 northern ridings in the province. In terms of transparency, there was also the Good Government Act in 2009, which proposed changes that will ensure that Ontarians' rights are protected and that the people of this province receive a high quality of service.

The new Public Inquiries Act, when proclaimed, proposes to bring balance to the system and provide our government and commissioners with better tools to determine the length and cost of an inquiry while continuing to support the independence of the inquiry process. Indeed, Ontario's changes to the Juries Act create a clear and transparent process for screening professional jurors who are ineligible to serve on a jury because of a prior transgression.

On transparency, our government has regulated paralegals. Much like the proposed Accounting Professions Act, this particular action creates a fully regulated paralegal system that protects consumers and gives Ontarians a very clear choice of qualified service providers.

In general, transparency also exists in the consumer protection Payday Loans Act, which has brought greater transparency to the payday loans business, whatever you think of it. I will candidly say that I don't think a great

deal of it. Nonetheless, it ensures that payday lenders and loan brokers are licensed and meet the criteria for licensing. It requires specific disclosures in payday loan agreements and advertising. It provides a cooling-off period. It also prohibits concurrent and rollover loans, and it really did correct a lot of egregious abuses in that.

In terms of transparency, Ontario also has the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, which is consumer protection. Referred to as TICO, it administers the consumer protection rules provided by the Travel Industry Act. It requires all travel agents and travel wholesalers to register.

The Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council has also been the subject of consumer protection.

This is one of just a very long series of acts that are aimed at protecting the public and ensuring transparency in the business practices of those institutions that the province proposes to regulate.

To quote the Attorney General, who, in closing, had this to say, "The Accounting Professions Act, if passed, would bring the statutes governing the three main regulatory bodies for accounting in line with 21st-century standards. New measures in the act would safeguard consumer protection and strengthen the accounting industry's transparency."

In my final moment, I would just like to thank, for their co-operation in drafting this particular bill, all three accounting bodies. They've shown consistent patience and goodwill throughout the entire procedure. I'm sure we're looking forward to seeing it in committee to determine whether or not we've got it right.

On that note, Speaker, I thank you very much for the time to address the House this morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Prue: Students from Centennial College are visiting Queen's Park today under the auspices of the legislative press gallery, and they are journalism students at Boreal College in East York. The names of the students are Kerry Prunskus, Lydia Moore, Meegan Scanlon, Reinisa MacLeod, Roger Tran, Julie Tu, Deeanna Charrion, Kris Baker, Clarisa Pessoa, Leticia Rodriguez, Bianca Murray and Ozman Omar. They are all up there in the gallery behind you. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to introduce, in the members' gallery, Inna Dubrovsky, who is the mother of Diana, a page from York Centre. Welcome.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm pleased to introduce Mary Beth Caliciuri, Anthony's mom, who is here again with us today and is enjoying a few days with us while Anthony gets acclimatized to the place.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'd like to introduce two groups of people today.

Joining us at Queen's Park from OECTA we have the Most Reverend Thomas Collins; Paula Peroni, president, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association; and Jim Ryan, the president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association.

From my riding is Mr. Vic Pendergast, a very strong community supporter and a board member with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario.

I encourage everyone to visit their respective receptions today. They are mutually agreeable that you could go to both. OECTA's reception is in room 228 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., and the Alzheimer Society of Ontario is in the Queen's Park dining room from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. We welcome those wonderful people who work so hard for our province.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature a number of people: Marita Devries from London; Diane Strachan, registered nurse from London Health Sciences Centre and ONA bargaining unit president; Jill Ross, registered nurse from London Health Sciences Centre; Sheree Bond, Ontario Nurses' Association; Lawrence Walter, Ontario Nurses' Association; Carolyn Edgar, registered nurse from North York General Hospital; Megan Strachan, York University student; and Beverley Belfon, registered nurse at North York General Hospital.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm very pleased to welcome to the Legislature today two of my constituents from York South-Weston: Edith George and Nick Di Nicio. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I would like to introduce the Alzheimer chapters that are joining us. From Toronto, Françoise Hébert, Andrew Ignatieff, Rosemary Corbett, Mary Ann Chang and Dan Andrae; from Windsor-Essex county, Sally Bennett Poliditis and Bob Renaud; from Perth county, Debbie Deichert and Agnes Deloyer; from Durham region, Chris Braney; from Huron county, Cathy Ritsema and Philip McMillan; from Brant, Hamilton and Halton, and Haldimand and Norfolk, you've already heard about Vic, but Mary Burnett, Ruth Simmons and Trevor Clark.

I encourage everyone, as my colleague has said, to join them at 4:30 in the legislative dining room for a reception.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome Michelle DesRoches and Stephan Kramp from the town of Midland. They're both joining us here today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am absolutely delighted to welcome family members of page Leah Kelly. Her mom, Loraine Kelly, is here, and her grandmother Kekio Kuryama and her grandfather Iwao Kuryama are here. Welcome to you all.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to welcome John Stunt, who is the retiring executive director of the Catholic trustees' association, and thank him for all the great work that he's done on behalf of school boards and students across the province.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the House the many Greeks who are here to celebrate Greek Independence Day—which is official-

ly tomorrow, but there's a budget tomorrow. We will be raising the Greek flag at Queen's Park at 12 o'clock.

Also, it gives me great pleasure to introduce a great Hamiltonian, the publisher of the Hamilton Hellenic News, Mr. Panos Andronidis.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: It's with great pleasure that I introduce one of my constituents. Phillip McMillan is here watching the proceedings. Welcome, Phillip. He's a strong community member in the riding of Huron-Bruce.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'd like to recognize one of my constituents who's here today with the Ontario Catholic school boards' association. He's the chair of the Wellington Catholic District School Board, Marino Gazzola.

Mr. David Zimmer: I would like to introduce one of Jordan's most talented energy engineers, Ms. Lubna Salah, who's here in Ontario for a month studying the Ontario energy sector.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to introduce some very good friends of mine who are with the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region. They're here today in support of their association. First is Teena Kindt, who is the CEO of the association. The second person is Elco Drost, who's the president of the board of directors. I'm pleased to welcome them here. As well, I'm urging all the members to attend their open House that they'll have later on this afternoon.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a member of the Catholic board from Sarnia-Lambton, Linda Ward, who is with us in the gallery today.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I am very proud to introduce and welcome Paula Peroni from Sudbury. She's with the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. Welcome, and thank you for all your work in Catholic education.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Vaughan and page Catia Marceau, we'd like to welcome her mother, Giulia Marceau, to the members' gallery today.

On behalf of the member from Brampton West and page Colin Boyle, I'd like to welcome his mother, Joe-Anne Boyle, his sister Caitlin Boyle and his grandmother Anne Boyle to the members' gallery.

On behalf of the member from Scarborough-Southwest and page Torin Hills, I'd like to welcome her mother, Mary Charles Hills, and father, Trevor Hills, to the Legislature today.

We have with us today, seated in the Speaker's gallery, David Harvey and Kathy Dewling from the Alzheimer Society of Ontario; and from the Alzheimer Society of London and Middlesex, Betsy Little and Francine Lacroix. Welcome to Queen's Park.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome our new group of pages and allow them to assemble for a formal introduction.

Alexander Bowie, Oakville; Colin Boyle, Brampton West; Anthony Caliciuri, Nipissing; Anne-Marie Cham-

berland, Ottawa–Orléans; Diana Dubrovsky, York Centre; Erin Gaudette, Windsor–Tecumseh; Giselle Groskleg, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke; Torin Hills, Scarborough Southwest; Leah Kelly, London North Centre; Snigdha Koirala, Toronto Centre; Catia Marceau, Vaughan; Harsh Modhera, Etobicoke North; Mathilda Murray, London West; Ben Neilipovitz, Thunder Bay–Superior North; Jameson Nguyen, Davenport; Eric Oh, Newmarket–Aurora; George Philp, York–Simcoe; Sabrina Sukhdeo, Thornhill; and Neale Taylor, Niagara West–Glanbrook. Welcome to all of our pages.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And for anyone who was not introduced and feels left out, welcome to Queen's Park today.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question for the Premier: On January 5, you were quoted as saying, "Ask not what your provincial government can impose on you; ask what, as a member of the public sector, you can bring to the table." Premier, you are handing over up to \$45,000 in severance to your HST tax collectors when they won't miss a single day of work. What exactly are your HST tax collectors bringing to the table?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It is true that there is a legal obligation pursuant to an agreement entered into by the Conservative government. I want to repeat that, because my colleagues across the way may have not heard it. There is a legal obligation pursuant to an agreement entered into between the former Conservative government and this employee group that provides for, in these circumstances, a severance payment to be made.

We believe that we have an obligation to honour that agreement. We believe, as taught by our parents, that a deal is a deal is a deal. We will honour that agreement, we will approach this as a matter of principle and we think that is the right thing to do in the circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Quite frankly, six years into a mandate is a bit late for the man who promised, "I won't raise your taxes" to worry about keeping his word.

Premier, in British Columbia, as you know, they are not paying out these types of sweetheart severances to the HST collectors. The Ontario HST collectors will get up to \$45,000 in severance. They're going to get a raise. They won't be missing a single day of work.

Premier, you have a choice to pay off this sweetheart bonus, or you can stand up for Ontario taxpayers. Will you do the right thing and cancel these sweetheart bonuses to your tax collectors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague makes reference to the British Columbia arrangement. That govern-

ment did not insert that clause into their agreement. That former government did.

Again, we believe that principle is not unimportant, and for that reason we will honour this agreement and we will find other ways, through our budget, to address the compensation issues generally.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know Dalton McGuinty and his colleagues say it's John Robarts's fault, that this was a deal John Robarts inked when he was Premier. I think you know that John Robarts became Premier well before I was born. It's time to get with the times, Premier, and if you're right that means it's time to make a change. If you won't do it, then step aside; we will.

This is clearly out of line with the expectations of taxpayers. When you're laying off nurses in the province of Ontario, when you're closing down ERs in communities like Fort Erie and Port Colborne, to pay out \$25 million in severance to tax collectors is way out of line. Premier, are you that much out of touch with reality that you think this is a good deal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I gather that what my colleague is saying is that notwithstanding the fact that he sat at a cabinet table where they approved this very agreement with this kind of a clause, with this kind of a provision and this kind of a severance package, were he in government today he would set aside this agreement. I think that's what he's telling us. I think what he's telling us is that, for him, a deal is not a deal is not a deal, and that you cannot rely on any agreement entered into by that government.

We bring a different approach. We think that the honourable thing to do, the responsible thing to do in the circumstances, is to honour this agreement. As I said a moment ago, we will find a way through our budget to address compensation issues generally.

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier. The principle here is simple: If you don't lose your job, you don't get severance. Every other employer follows this pattern. British Columbia is following this pattern. All we're asking is for Dalton McGuinty to do the same thing. There are so many better uses for that \$25 million in severance than the sweetheart deals to your HST tax collectors who don't miss a day on the job and are also getting a pay raise.

Premier, will you do the right thing? Will you stand up for Ontario taxpayers and cancel these sweetheart severances?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just so that my colleague is clear, and Ontarians as well are informed on this matter, we changed the agreement for new hires effective 2006. We rejected the approach brought by the former Conservative government at the time, in which my honourable colleague sat in cabinet and approved the very agreement which requires that we provide this severance package.

In any event, we've changed what we can. We're now doing what we believe is the honourable thing in the circumstances. To repeat once again, we will address the issue of compensation more generally through our budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know that the Premier is trying to use the union contract as a cover to hand out up to \$25 million to his HST tax collectors, who won't miss a single day on the job. I know that they're in Dalton McGuinty's favourite friends. They're going to bring in, after all, \$3 billion for him to hand out to his Liberal friends in sweetheart deals as a result of this massive tax increase on the backs of Ontario families. But Premier, I think you know that there is no language in the agreement calling for the province to compensate employees who won't miss a single day on the job. Every other jurisdiction follows this rule; BC is providing this way. Why is Dalton McGuinty making a special exemption for his HST tax collectors that BC is not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thought I've been very clear on this, but I'm pleased to repeat it for the sake of my colleague. The BC government was not bound by an agreement, previously entered into by another government, of the sort that we have been. When my colleague sat at the cabinet table, he was party to a government which entered into an agreement which requires that these kinds of severances be paid. We will honour that agreement; we think that's the honourable thing to do and the right thing to do in the circumstances.

We have said that when we could, in 2006, we changed it so that for new hires beyond that point in time we would not be bound by this kind of provision. We've done what we can. We think it's the right thing to do in the circumstances, and again, we will be addressing the issue of compensation generally through the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the agreement and the Public Service of Ontario Act do not have any term that says it must pay severance to individuals who are not missing a single day on the job. You made no effort whatsoever to dispute this. You didn't lift a finger. You didn't stand up or think of taxpayers for one single moment. You're only too happy to hand over some \$25 million in sweetheart severance bonuses to your HST tax collectors.

Premier, there is a simple principle: If you don't lose your job, you don't get severance. Will you do the right thing and dispute this handout to these HST tax collectors, or put it in your budget bill? Because handing out that \$25 million is just plain wrong.

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the bluster; I really do. But I think it's just a little bit rich that a member of the former Conservative government who approved this very provision in this very agreement is now standing up and being vociferous in his objection to the provision that he put into the agreement in the first place.

This is not the first time we've been stuck with an agreement prepared by that former government.

We will do everything we can to always uphold the interests of the taxpayers. But we feel, as a matter of principle and as a matter of honour, that it's important we honour this agreement.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians are anxiously awaiting tomorrow's budget to find out whether they'll keep losing health services that they need in this province.

Will the Premier take this opportunity to assure Ontarians right now that no community will lose health care services as a result of tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague. I think what Ontarians can and will continue to look to, of course, is our record. We have provided for a dramatic increase in funding levels for our hospitals and for our health care services generally. We have thousands more nurses. We are building new hospitals and expanding existing hospitals. We are creating ever more access to quality health care services, doctors, MRIs, CTs, shorter wait times, nurse-practitioner-led clinics, many new programs and service models that we put in place. That's the path we are on, and that's the path we will continue to follow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government's record is one of health care services disappearing across the province. Patients in Ottawa are losing 190 nursing positions, Fort Erie and Port Colborne emergency rooms are closed, 140 health care jobs are gone in Hamilton, and Toronto East General lost its physiotherapy, pain and cardiac rehabilitation clinics. Across Ontario, the list goes on and on and on.

Will the Premier assure Ontarians that no community will lose any more health care services in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I've answered that. I'll never be able to answer it to the satisfaction of my honourable colleague; I understand that. But hospital funding, for example, has gone up 42% since we formed the government. It will go up again this year.

The other conversation that I would really appreciate my colleague becoming engaged in is, how do we ensure that we continue to provide good-quality health services for all of our families in a way that does not compromise our capacity to fund our schools, our social programs and our investments in infrastructure like roads and bridges? I think that's an important conversation that we want to begin to engage Ontarians in. Of course they want their health care to be there for them, but they also want good schools and good social programs to be there as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't understand how this Premier can brag about a 42% increase in costs when ser-

vices are being reduced in community after community after community.

Worried Ontario families want assurances that emergency rooms, nurses and pain clinics are going to be there when they actually need them. Some have seen the slow erosion of front-line services, while others have seen last-minute bailouts of hospitals when it's politically beneficial for this government.

Will the Premier be picking more winners and losers in tomorrow's budget? Or will he commit to providing each and every Ontarian with the same access to quality health care services wherever they happen to live?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I really appreciate my colleague's raising this issue, but they're the same kinds of questions that, frankly, I asked when I was in opposition. There's a new debate now, and I think it's important that we all join this debate. It has to do with more than just ensuring—and this is very important—that our families have access to quality health care today. It also has to do with what we need to do to ensure that our children and their children will have access to good-quality health care in the future and to do so in a way that does not compromise our ability to fund other important public services. That's the new debate, and that's the debate I would ask my honourable colleague to join as soon as possible.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier, but I'd like to tell him that the debate that keeps raging is whether or not this government is actually going to provide the services that people need in health care in this province. That's the debate he should be paying attention to.

London is the latest community to see front-line services vanish. Marita Devries, who's in the gallery today with us, was diagnosed with invasive breast cancer last June. She's just one of many women and men who are about to lose the nurses that provide them support as they go through their treatment process.

If the Premier's investing in health care, why are women like Marita worried about what's going to happen to the nurses who are caring for them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member for the question. This, referring to the London Health Sciences Centre hospital, of course is very close to my heart and it's an issue that I've watched closely.

What I can tell the member opposite is that we're doing really hard work in health care across this province. Our hospitals, our LHINs, are working very hard to ensure that we get the very best value for the money we spend on health care. Sometimes that might mean doing things differently. We are absolutely committed to supporting people through the health care challenges they face, but when the evidence suggests there's a better way to spend money, we have to pay attention to that evidence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, there's one piece of evidence that's clear, and that is that cutting nurses who support people as they fight cancer is absolutely cruel. Thousands have come forward to say no to these very cuts.

Here's what they are saying on online forums and petitions: Debra says, "They hold our hands, wipe our tears, guide us through unknown journeys. Never once do they send us an itemized bill for their skill and genuine concern...." Ron says, "I guess hospitals don't have any time for the sick these days."

How can the Premier and this minister be so callous as to cut the nursing care to people in their time of greatest need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's a important that we bring some clarity to this conversation. The nurses that may be cut at London Health Sciences Centre are those who work in the mammography screening program. The best evidence through the World Health Organization, through Cancer Care Ontario, tells us that mammography screening is the only screening method that has proven to be effective. There is no discussion about cutting nurses who care for people with cancer. The discussion is: Can those nurses who are working in breast screening be better used elsewhere?

A debate is a healthy thing; it's important we talk about the facts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I can't believe the response from this minister. What do you think nurses do in a mammography clinic if they don't support the women that are going there for a breast screening?

London residents know that things are not right. The hospital is spending \$800,000 on a CEO while patient care is being cut. Thousands have signed a petition, and even the member from London West says that the situation isn't right. But the question remains, what will this government do? Will the Premier listen to Marita, to Debra and to Ron and to other patients like them, or will he ignore them and continue to cut patient care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our commitment to caring for patients is stronger than it has ever before been. Our record speaks for itself: We have hired 10,000 more nurses over the course of our time in office. We believe in the care that nurses provide; in fact, we are expanding the scope of practices for nurses. Nurses are the backbone of our health care system. They are there when people need care. That's why we're committed to supporting new nurses as they graduate through a new nursing graduate guarantee, where they'll get experience right after they graduate so they can become full-time nurses in our health care system.

Nurses are vitally important. We will continue to support them in London and across the province.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Your fumbling yesterday

on the number of jobs to come out of the Samsung deal means you and your government really don't have a clue as to how many jobs might be created. The McGuinty government chose a model of taxpayer-funded feed-in tariffs and rich incentives to foreign companies. So perhaps the minister can get this next number right: How many Ontario jobs will be lost because of your Samsung giveaway?

1100

Hon. Brad Duguid: I don't know how straightforward our answers can be, and I don't know why the member refuses to want to admit it. Actually, I know why he refuses to want to admit it: because it's good news for Ontarians, which is something that's anathema to this member and his party.

The fact is, the Samsung deal will bring 16,000 jobs to this province—16,000 green jobs. It involves a \$7-billion investment in this economy. But it's more than that. What this does is create that major tenet in our green economy that's going to help produce even more jobs, that's bringing companies from all around the world to Ontario. What this has done is make Ontario a destination for green energy investment—something we're proud of, something all Ontarians are proud of, something the member obviously does not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The minister doesn't want to tell Ontarians the whole story, because the minister knows all about the March 2009 university study on the impact of Spain's green energy policy, which George Smitherman hailed as the global leader and on which the Green Energy Act was modelled. That study concludes that for every one green job created, 2.2 jobs were lost in Spain's economy. Minister, it really doesn't matter if you pick a number like 1,400 or 16,000 or 50,000. It's always going to mean net job losses for Ontario.

Minister, stop blowing green smoke at Ontarians and tell them honestly: How many jobs are going to disappear?

Hon. Brad Duguid: In fact, there's even better news, because the Green Energy Act is going to create 50,000 jobs in this province. Day in and day out, I am meeting people—in fact, there's somebody in the audience today with the Middle East—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister. Members will please come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will come to order. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Halton, I just sat down and you just opened up.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: A day does not go by when somebody is not here at Queen's Park, either somebody who's an advocate here in this province, trying to develop green energy, or somebody coming from abroad. Today we have a guest in the Legislature from Middle East solutions and technologies for energy and environment, coming to Ontario to see all the good things we're doing to attract attention from around the world.

Ontario is open for business. We're open for green energy business. We're developing this sector; we're creating 50,000 new green jobs through these initiatives. These are new—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier: More than four million working Ontarians have no workplace pension whatsoever. We in the NDP have proposed a well-received retirement plan that would allow every working Ontarian to retire with dignity and security.

Premier, will tomorrow's budget contain any good news for the four million working Ontarians lacking a workplace pension? Eighteen months after the Arthurs report gave you a blueprint for expanding pension coverage in this province, will this government continue to ignore the retirement plight of four million Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague—I thank, first of all, my honourable colleague for the question. I know he has a sincere interest in this issue.

I believe that my colleague Minister Duncan made reference to the fact that another bill would be introduced in this Legislature which will again treat this very important issue. My honourable colleague also knows that this is a matter that I have raised with the Prime Minister and with my counterparts from across the country. We see this as a national challenge. It affects Canadians from coast to coast to coast, as we say, and it begs for a national solution.

I'm also pleased to learn that this very afternoon, Minister Flaherty is launching a national discussion, which we welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Premier, but quite frankly, if you're going to stand around and wait for Stephen Harper and Jim Flaherty to act, nothing is going to happen.

Pensions, Premier, are a provincial responsibility in the vast majority of Ontario workplaces, as you know, particularly the workplaces that employ the four million Ontarians who currently lack coverage.

I'm going to ask you again, Premier: Will tomorrow's budget contain meaningful action to expand pension coverage to the four million working Ontarians who presently have no pension?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague will have to wait, of course, until tomorrow, when we present the

budget in this Legislature, to address the issues that we think warrant addressing at this particular point in time.

What I do want to say to my colleague—and I know he will understand this and admit to this, and Ontarians, of course, will need to recognize this—is that any new approach to dealing with pensions has a cost associated with it. Generally, we're talking about cost to both employers and employees.

I know that my honourable colleague and his party have put together a proposal. I would be very interested in knowing how much that proposal would cost individual employees and individual employers so that we come to grips with the real consequences.

I think it speaks to the need for all these ideas to come together, and I'm very pleased that a national effort has now been launched.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. With more students on our campuses, we're seeing additional strain on facilities, classrooms and labs. Universities and colleges are trying to keep up with the increased demand on their campuses.

Just last year in my riding of Peterborough, Trent University received over \$20 million in infrastructure funding towards their DNA and Health Sciences Centre through the joint federal-provincial knowledge infrastructure program.

Minister, what else have we done to ensure our post-secondary institutions are prepared to support our students?

Hon. John Milloy: I would like to thank the member for the question. I also want to tell members that I had a wonderful visit to Peterborough yesterday to address the chamber of commerce and had a chance to meet with representatives of Trent University, which is one of the finest universities here in the province.

The member is right: We need to make sure that we invest in the bricks and mortar side of education to make sure that we modernize our facilities, boost our long-term research and, most importantly, increase capacity.

Recent capital investments at our colleges and universities have totalled nearly \$3 billion. Last year, as members know, in partnership with the federal government through KIP, we announced \$1.5 billion in capital projects at colleges and universities across Ontario. These infrastructure investments altogether have created about 15,000 new jobs and, I'm pleased to inform members, will create about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Public infrastructure is vital to every person in Ontario, including the schools where our children learn and colleges and universities that equip our young people with the skills and knowledge that they need in a competitive world economy.

Our investments are providing real economic stimulus and employment by creating local jobs for engineers, architects, tradespeople and technicians. It is also helping to generate the advanced technological infrastructure needed to keep Canada's research and education facilities on the forefront of scientific advancement.

We know that our higher education is becoming more and more important in today's economy. Minister, how are infrastructure investments at our universities achieving these very important goals?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, through these investments we're going to be creating about 36,000 new spaces. But I'd like to draw members' attention not just to my opinion, but to the opinion of an outside source, the Council of Ontario Universities. They recently released a report entitled *Government Infrastructure Dollars at Work*, which highlights the important impact our infrastructure investments are having on our campuses and communities.

The report highlights what our universities are doing with the infrastructure funding they've received and how it's improving research and higher learning in our province. The report cites that many universities are building collaborative learning environments and technologically advanced classrooms designed for contemporary approaches to teaching.

No matter the discipline, undergraduate and graduate students will benefit from advanced learning settings that will prepare them for the knowledge economy.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition launched our "10 for 2010" website of 10 good ideas that, when implemented, will create private sector jobs and get Ontario's economy back on course.

One of these ideas is to create jobs in northern Ontario, a region where families have seen six years of lip service from you, Premier, but have seen no action.

Will you adopt the PC plan to restore northern Ontario's freedom to pursue resource-based job creation north of the 51st parallel and give the north a real say on the revenues and where they'll be directed?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question. Indeed, may I tell the member from the other side of the House that the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry is very proud of the investments that our government has made to the northern Ontario heritage fund, rising from \$60 million to \$80 million. We are doing some work in terms of the forestry sector, providing extraordinary incentives to the industry, working on wood supply competition and certainly working on a forest tenure system.

The fact is, if I may say so, we are looking forward to the budget tomorrow. I hope I'm not stepping out of line

by saying that. Certainly we are looking forward to having some announcements that are significant for northern Ontario. But the long and the short of it is that our government has been incredibly supportive of northern Ontario. We have created 12,000 jobs, or retained 12,000 jobs, in northern Ontario through the northern Ontario heritage fund alone and, quite frankly, there's a lot—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Investment needs certainty, but your ham-fisted policies have chased away those wanting to invest in the north, because the Far North Act creates uncertainty. But don't just take my word for it. Harold Wilson, the president of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, says, "When you say that 50% of land will be taken out of use and preserved, but you don't say which 50%, you rather create difficulties on the 100%." He also adds that hydro in Ontario costs twice what it does in Manitoba and Quebec, and the McGuinty Liberals' new taxes will drive it up even more.

Will you follow our advice and scrap your ill-conceived Far North Act?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We make no apologies for protecting the boreal forest, and we are going to build the northern economy through our Open Ontario plan with the Ring of Fire development that was in our throne speech: an extraordinary development, one of the greatest opportunities we've seen in northern Ontario in over a century. May I say, the member was with us at Meet the Miners Day yesterday. We are working with the mining community and the mining sector in terms of modernizing the Mining Act, and we've worked closely with them to help bring investment back to northern Ontario. We've provided a balanced piece of legislation that continues to provide a positive investment climate while we also reflect 21st century values. But I'll tell you again: no apologies from us. The fact is, we are very excited about the Open Ontario plan for the Ring of Fire which will create thousands of jobs in northern Ontario in the next decade.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. After intense pressure from health professionals, community groups, parents and, I dare say, the press across this province, we read today in the paper that this Premier may temporarily protect essential child care spaces from closure.

My question is, why won't this same Premier protect the special diet allowances of 160,000 social assistance recipients who depend on support to deal with critical health conditions such as HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis and cystic fibrosis?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Like I said to the member a few days ago, he should wait for the budget on Thursday to know what is in the budget and what is out of the

budget. But this government is very proud about what we have done for poverty in this province. Contrary to the government that preceded us, we have increased social assistance by 11%, and we're very proud of it. Again, on Thursday, we will see if there is another increase. We have also helped those workers who work at minimum wages by raising the minimum wage, and they will see \$10.25 per hour on March 31. The full-day learning that the Minister of Education has announced is also—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The reason I asked the Premier the question is because, for the past two weeks, the Minister of Community and Social Services has refused to rule out the ending of the special diet allowance, as she did again today.

On Monday, March 21, medical and nursing associations, led by prominent Ontarians like Dr. Michael Rachlis and Dr. Gordon Guyatt, wrote to the Premier and to the minister urging them to maintain the special diet allowance. They said, in part, that the social assistance rates in Ontario are grossly inadequate and that the money is desperately needed for these social assistance recipients. Health professionals, the Toronto Board of Health, the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal and others who signed it recognize the importance of the special diet allowance in preventing serious illness. Why won't the government rule out making cuts to the special diet allowance today?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: As the member knows with his experience in this House, we'll have to wait for Thursday to know what will be in the budget.

But this government has done a lot for poor people. For example, we implemented the Ontario child benefit. And what did this member do when we implemented it? He voted against it.

We also increased the minimum wage. What did this member do? The member voted against it.

We also provided an income tax package which will benefit the poor in this province. What did this member do? He voted against it.

So we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Northerners understand all too well the importance of the mineral and forest resources we have in our province, but today I wanted to talk to you about the north's people, especially its young people. Our government has been clear that we will work hard to ensure that job opportunities exist in northern Ontario for young people starting to build their careers, and a great example of that would be the renewed focus of the northern Ontario heritage fund on private sector job creation.

Minister, last week you and I announced the funding for the summer jobs service program, a program that will help students in their quest for summer employment. Could you please share with the House what this program is and how it will benefit northern students this summer?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks so much for the question. Certainly, last Friday's summer jobs service program announcement was incredibly important for northern Ontario students and employers. I was delighted to announce, along with my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, that this year our government is investing more than we ever have to support summer jobs creation across northern Ontario. This year's program funding will be administered by the staff of the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, and it is a record \$5.65 million, which translates into funding for as many as 6,200 summer jobs, several hundred more than last year.

Our government has made it very, very clear that the Open Ontario plan will continue to provide as many opportunities as possible for students looking for work in the north, to help lay the foundation for them to gain employment after graduation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last week's announcement was very important for both the employers and the students. At the announcement—I remember this very poignantly—we had the opportunity to hear from a northern aboriginal youth who was part of the summer jobs program, and he spoke very passionately about the experience he gained through the program.

This is first-hand evidence that the service program is working and that our government's investment is in fact giving students the opportunity to gain the skills and experience they need for a future in the north and a future they want. The experience that the students in the program will gain is very important, as these jobs often point students in the direction of the work they will be passionate about for the rest of their lives.

Minister, could you please tell the House more about the service program and the types of job opportunities that exist?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Indeed, it's really moving speaking to the young students who benefit from this program.

The summer jobs service program makes it possible for employers to hire students by providing them with a \$2-an-hour wage subsidy as an incentive to hire students between 15 and 30 years of age who are planning to return to school in the fall. These students obviously get an opportunity to gain valuable experience in forestry, tourism, retail and various other sectors.

There are a number of examples of summer job opportunities there, and certainly some of them are in the Ontario public service. The Ontario Ranger program is an incredibly successful program. It's an eight-week program working in natural resources management, living in a remote camp—again, great training for that. There's something called Summer Company, which is a great

opportunity for enterprising young people who want to start and run their own summer business.

So there are many opportunities, and it's great news for northern Ontario young people.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Premier. Premier, it is estimated that 37% of Ontario contractor renovation jobs are currently done by the underground economy. Let me give you some numbers: That means that \$5.2 billion of the renovation industry goes to the underground annually. Your government's HST will make it impossible for legitimate renovators to compete with a cash deal. Your HST will only build that underground economy. How are you going to protect consumers and the renovation sector from the certainty of disappearing to the underground economy?

1120

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the question. I say to the member, this government supports the 400,000 men and women who work in the construction sector. This government also wants to protect and safeguard those men and women who go to work every day to build our cities, our houses, our bridges, our roads. We've brought in safeguards. We've doubled the number of inspectors to get out on the job sites to ensure the health and safety of those workers.

Unlike that party—when they were in government, they fired water inspectors. They fired meat inspectors. They diluted health and safety—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I know why this is called question period: because there are never any answers.

This question is about HST and has nothing to do with the labour minister. Billions of dollars are already being lost to the various levels of government. The HST will only increase that loss.

The Altus Group, commissioned by the Ontario Home Builders' Association—which is not happy with your HST—estimates that the current losses are \$1.6 billion in personal income tax, an additional \$298 million in GST revenue, and about \$767 million from other revenues.

Premier, unless this is the money that your government is willing to part with, I ask again, why would you proceed with a tax—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: This government has invested a historic \$32.5 billion in infrastructure to support the construction sector—again, to build our economy here in Ontario while ensuring the protections, the health and safety of those construction workers. We continue to be on side with the workers to build our cities, to invest in construction. That's what I'm hearing from the industry.

At the same time, we want to ensure that those good employers have a level playing field and that we tackle the underground economy. That's what we're doing by

having our inspectors out there in the field, ensuring that everybody is playing by the rules, with a level playing field, and that those workers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Huron Central Railway operates a line from Sault Ste. Marie to Sudbury. It moves freight like steel and pulp, and it is critical in supporting good jobs in the north. The operator is losing money and is threatening to pull out by the end of the month without government support to upgrade the deteriorating tracks. Ottawa has already committed stimulus funding. Why is Ontario holding up this project?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Like many proposed projects out there, they're obviously under consideration at this point in time, and we look forward to doing as much as we can. This is part of a \$32.5-billion infrastructure investment we've made over the last two years. We're talking about 300,000 jobs that have been created through that infrastructure investment. Those are the numbers we predicted would be the case. The Conference Board of Canada not only verified those numbers, but indicated that our numbers were conservative and that, indeed, even more jobs were being created as a result of these very important and integral investments.

We're taking under consideration the issue the member has raised. It's certainly one of the matters that's under consideration within the ministry. We'll continue to take it very seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Time is running out. Northern families are not going to be happy with this government's waffling and stalling on this very important issue for their community. They're worried about the railway shutting down.

Sault Ste. Marie city council sent a letter to Ottawa and Queen's Park urging immediate action. The city's chief administrative officer said, "Whatever needs to be done by the federal and provincial government, needs to get done." Ottawa says that Ontario needs to sign an infrastructure agreement before money flows.

Will the Premier stop passing the buck, sign this agreement and put northern Ontario families and communities first for a change?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased, again, to respond to the question to say that we're still having a very close look at this. Let me tell you something, the member from Sault Ste. Marie, David Oraziotti, has been absolutely relentless in promoting this project. I think I hear from the member from Sault Ste. Marie about every second day on this and other projects from that region.

I can tell you that we're looking forward to continuing with the unprecedented level of investment in the north and right across this province. The \$32.5 billion that

we've invested over the next two years are contributing very much to ensuring that Ontario families have access to good-quality jobs; 300,000 jobs have been created over the two-year period of this particular program.

We're going to continue to invest in infrastructure, and we'll certainly take the advice of the member very seriously.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is also for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, with the 2010 budget being tabled tomorrow, I would like to ask a question about last year's budget. In 2009, over \$32.5 billion was committed to invest in infrastructure over a two-year period—obviously a significant investment. Constituents in my riding want the government's assurance that these funds are being spent in a responsible manner and that they're going to worthwhile projects that will make the communities we live in better today and long into the future. They also want to know how these investments are supporting local projects, like new recreation facilities for their kids. They want to know that our job commitment translates into jobs locally.

Minister, what are you doing to ensure this historic investment—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member raises a very important question. I too believe that citizens deserve to know how these investments are benefiting our communities. I'm pleased to tell you that, together with the federal government, we've developed accountability measures to do just that. We've published program guidelines and signed agreements governing the use of infrastructure funds; we've built interministerial teams to evaluate project applications against certain criteria, such as construction readiness and environmental assessments; and we're making certain that funds are distributed fairly in all regions of the province to ensure that all regions of this province can benefit.

In fact, in the member's own community of Guelph, we're investing in a number of different projects to improve the quality of life of her residents. We're investing in roads, like Westmount and Edinburgh. We're making renovations to the River Run performing arts centre. We're supporting projects such as the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Minister, I'm heartened to hear that this government is taking reasonable measures to ensure that funding is distributed in a responsible and fair manner. I think, however, that my constituents want to see the results. They want to see improvements to their roads and public transit, to educational and recreational facilities, to water and to affordable housing.

After years of neglect under previous governments, our infrastructure can't wait any longer. These projects need to get under way today. You said that 2,600 projects

have been approved so far, and in downtown Guelph you can see the road construction, but what about the other infrastructure projects?

Minister, how can citizens all across Ontario learn about the projects in their own communities?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the supplementary. As you know, we do have a tight time frame on these projects, and I'm happy to report that the 2,600 shovel-ready projects are expected to be completed by March 31 of next year. In fact, 1,700 of them are already under way or complete as of today.

Shovels are in the ground and people are working. Ontarians are seeing the results of our infrastructure investments. More importantly, this government wants Ontarians to see the results of our investments and to see them from the comfort of their own homes. That's why my predecessor, Minister Phillips, helped launch our new website, Revitalizing Ontario's Infrastructure, which can be found at www.ontario.ca/infrastructure. This website will provide greater transparency to the citizens of Ontario by tracking the progress of these construction projects. They can turn to these websites—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1130

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, your government is acting like workplace safety is an exclusive union issue, and so does your new health and safety advisory board, the IHSA. Only 30% of Ontario's construction workers are unionized; however, 100% of the positions on the new advisory board and the board of directors are reserved for unionized workers.

What makes you think that this board, created for the safety of the workers, can be reserved for, and given out solely and exclusively to, your friends at the Working Families Coalition?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question, and the opportunity to talk about health and safety in the province and the importance of prevention. We work with our partners on health and safety, partners like the WSIB and our health and safety associations, as the member mentioned. We work with labour groups, we work with employers and we work with employees—all working together to build a stronger health and safety system in the province of Ontario.

That's why we have now an expert advisory panel that is looking at occupational health and safety in the province in a comprehensive way. That panel is being chaired by Tony Dean, somebody who is respected by employers, by labour, by government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, a fair way of protecting Ontarians would include representation for all construction workers. Your government has talked tough about

integrity, but I see you have found a new way to skirt the rules once again. Instead of working towards worker safety, you've just found another way to give your union friends another sweetheart deal. Your friend Steve Mahoney, chair of the WSIB, which funds the IHSA, should make safety the only priority for the association. Instead, he's feathering your Liberal nest.

We remember him for his expensive dinners on the taxpayers' dime. Why is this safety board being handed out like a political plum to your friends at Working Families?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I know that member enjoys divisive politics, but we are talking about the health and safety of our greatest resource in the province of Ontario, and that is our people. We will continue to work in a way that can prevent injuries and fatalities from happening in the workplace.

Our health and safety associations work with all sectors, work with all employers, work with labour groups and hear from employees how we can bring in the best practices to help ensure the safety of those workers, so that our moms and dads, so that our brothers and sisters come home at the end of the day, safe and sound, to their families. That is my number one priority as Minister of Labour and for our ministry, and our government sees that as one of our top—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The question is to the Premier: Tomorrow is going to be the budget, and you know as well as I do that hydro prices, when it comes to our major employers in northern Ontario, are a real issue. In the case of Xstrata, it is one of the primary reasons why that Xstrata mill, as far as the smelter and refinery, is shutting down.

Tomorrow in your budget, can we expect that you're going to respond to the issue of hydro so companies like Xstrata don't have to shut down and move to the province of Quebec?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. I know my honourable colleague knows that I've met with representatives from Xstrata. I had a good discussion with them and I put very directly to them a question: "Tell me exactly why you are investing so heavily, for example, in Sudbury, but you are removing some of your operations from Timmins"—in case my friend would have us believe that somehow they're removing themselves entirely from Ontario. I focused on electricity prices, and those were an issue, but they were not by any means the defining issue or the determining issue in the future of Xstrata in the province of Ontario. I just want to make sure that my friend understands that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Premier, Xstrata's metallurgical site is the largest utility customer for hydro in Ontario. You can't make this House believe and you can't make

the people of Ontario believe that, somehow, your high energy cost for electricity is not one of the reasons—and the primary reason—that this company is shutting down its smelter refinery.

I ask you again, can we expect in the budget tomorrow that your government is going to respond to this issue and deal with the electricity prices so that we don't see more Xstratas of the world leaving Ontario for jurisdictions in Manitoba and Quebec, where they have better hydro prices than here?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It is true—and I think we need to be honest about this—that electricity prices are lower in Manitoba and Quebec. They have been blessed with a different kind of geography that enables them to harness hydroelectric power, which gives them a competitive advantage in that way. That's not to say that we haven't done much and won't continue to do more for our energy-intensive companies. We have a number of programs in place to help them reduce their energy usage: conservation programs, energy reduction opportunities and the like.

With respect to the budget itself, of course, I know that my friend is impatient in that regard, but he'll have to wait and see when we present that in this very House tomorrow.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, farmers in my riding have brought to my attention a national print, radio and web-based public notice campaign for the Growing Forward program. They are concerned that this campaign does not promote any specific program and, more importantly, there is no mention of a current business risk management review. I know that Ontario farmers have been communicating with you, as you too have been hearing from farmers in my riding about many issues, but most importantly about business risk management. Ontario farmers are dissatisfied with parts of the existing suite of programs. They say it's not working for them.

Will the minister explain to the House what this ad campaign is all about?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I want to thank the member for the question. The federal government is currently running a national Growing Forward awareness campaign from late February to the end of March. To be clear, this ad campaign is an initiative that is by the federal government only. To my knowledge, the provincial governments were not consulted on its design—certainly not Ontario.

I'm very proud to say that the McGuinty government has stepped up to the plate numerous times where the federal government has failed to stand up for Ontario farmers. We listened to the concerns of our grain and oilseed producers, and we delivered a three-year RMP pilot for that sector. The province funded its traditional 40% share for three years. Of course, we were very dis-

appointed that the federal government wasn't able to join us in this initiative in support of our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Minister, I know that you presented the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition proposal at the FPT meeting last month. I'm hearing that with the business risk management plan, farmers will have no bankable support and be in a better position to deal with the challenges that nature, global competition in agrifuel and import costs present.

I know you've been pushing for the national business risk management strategic review to move forward to help our farmers, which they have been asking for. I'm also aware that you've been asking our farmers to support you in your efforts to push the federal government to come to the table as partners. My constituents would like the federal government to come to the table, just like we did, and provide support to the sector, required in these challenging times.

Minister, would it be easier to support our farmers if we had a real partner in the federal government?

Interjection: Good question.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: It is a very good question.

Ontario farmers are dissatisfied with parts of the existing suite of programs, and I sought to make that clear to my federal, provincial and territorial colleagues at the FPT.

We are very proud of the support we have been able to give our Ontario farmers, and I know that we could do much more if our federal government would work with us to provide effective programming to meet the needs of Ontario farmers.

My priority is to ensure that the national BRM strategic review moves forward aggressively. I am focused on the need to address producers' concerns related to complexity, bankability and predictability.

I understand that Ontario producers are restless for change. I can assure them that I will be likewise restless in my—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. On Monday I would have hoped you saw or heard what took place on The Agenda With Steve Paikin, live from Timmins, where a number of the municipalities—Jamie Lim, from the Ontario Forestry Association was there, and a question came forward about the impact of the Endangered Species Act. Minister, what's taking place there? Once fully implemented, they're looking at entire communities being shut down as a result of the implementation of the Endangered Species Act.

Can you commit to work with the forestry industry and the municipalities in northern Ontario to minimize the impact of the Endangered Species Act on those communities in the north?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question. This is an extraordinarily important issue and something that I've spent the last two months working with.

I have to tell you that I have had some extraordinary conversations with the forestry sector. Certainly, anybody from the northern communities—northern mayors have come to speak to me at OGRA and ROMA. I am absolutely committed to working and consulting with our First Nations, with our northern members, and certainly with the forestry sector and the mining industry, that came to talk to me yesterday.

The Endangered Species Act is a commitment of our government; it's very important to us. We want to get it right, and we are committed to working with all of our partners on this important piece of legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thank you for that supplementary, Minister. The timing is a little off.

A lot of the industry is of great concern, as well as the impact on the forestry sector. If you look at the Coalition for Fair Lumber Imports and what's going to take place with the Endangered Species Act, with the individuals working in that sector—if you look at the Atlantic forestry magazine, it will specifically talk about the fact that Ontario has been taken to court and effectively may shut down many more of those industries in the north that are being affected. You have the Endangered Species Act, along with the US Coalition for Fair Lumber Imports, effectively shutting down a lot of those.

Minister, we need some sort of a commitment to ensure that those sectors are strong, because they are the lifeblood of the north. How can you help, Minister?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I would like to comment that there has been a lot of speculation, and certainly a lot of misinformation and a lot of analysis that's wrong. It's certainly frightening, and there are scare tactics going on in a lot of media, certainly last night in some of the Timmins papers. This isn't helpful.

We need to work with our forestry sector, and we're going to find a way to make sure that economic development continues in the north. The north is our future. We intend to work with them. I appreciate the question. We're going to continue to work with our partners to make sure the Endangered Species Act and development in the north continue to progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to welcome a delegation from China headed by Mr. Yaozu Cui, president of the China higher education information and career centre, CHSI; Ms. Lili Zhang, manager, CHSI; Mr. Yingui He, international marketing director, CHSI;

and Wenjie Chen, office manager, CHSI. They are joined by Mrs. Grace Chum, president of Sinobridge and Perfect Link, and my very good friend and constituent, the former member of Parliament, Mr. Sarkis Assadourian. Please join me in welcoming them.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MAX KEEPING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On behalf of the residents of Nepean—Carleton and my PC caucus colleagues from eastern Ontario, Steve Clark, Randy Hillier, Norm Sterling and John Yakabuski, I'd like to say thank you to Max Keeping.

Born a Maritimer who left Nova Scotia when I was 23 years old, Max's life story spoke to me; it inspired me. He arrived in Ottawa via Newfoundland and Nova Scotia also at the ripe old age of 23. He embraced his new hometown, every Canadian's second hometown, the city of Ottawa.

Max became a CFRA, then CTV, reporter before joining CJOH as its anchor and news director.

But it's not just his journalism that sets him apart from the rest. Indeed, it's Max's commitment to the people of Ottawa, in particular our children and youth. Max was a driving force behind making our local newscasts child-friendly. The Max Keeping Wing at CHEO and his many other honours recognize that commitment.

But it was also his work as the founder of Children and Youth Friendly Ottawa that makes it so special. In fact, the first time I ever met Dalton McGuinty was at a CAYFO event at the Spirit of the Capital Awards with Max Keeping. It was long before Dalton McGuinty was elected Premier of this province and long before I was elected an MPP in this chamber. But even then, Max impressed upon us the importance of Ontario's children and youth.

Later, as I became an MPP, I was able to bring forward the children's bill of safety and protective rights, and I beamed with pride when Max Keeping endorsed that bill.

I'll always be grateful to Max Keeping. He was a role model to me and to so many others across Ottawa. It's a privilege to know and to work with him.

I congratulate Max on his retirement and in his new role as CTV ambassador. It's an honour to say thank you, Max Keeping, for your commitment to our city.

ENVIRONMENT AWARD

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would like to congratulate two University of Western Ontario students for winning a \$25,000 award from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation.

The students, Hilary Booth and Peter Schnurr, won the award for growing biofuels that would provide an al-

ternative method for generating energy while meanwhile being safe for the environment. These students were in competition with 45 other teams and were one out of four selected. The elimination process is very rigorous as the many talented teams showcase their creations.

As you know, the safety and protection of our environment is crucial, and I commend these students for applying their critical thinking skills and innovative ideas in progressing science and alternative energy. It's their hard work and dedication that ensures that our environment is protected from harmful chemicals and also raises awareness about the new and fresh ideas young people have to offer regarding going green.

I commend both of these students for putting their ideas forward and demonstrating to aspiring scientists, environmentalists and citizens everywhere that there are always cleaner energy options to pursue.

EDUCATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's a pleasure, on behalf of my leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus, to welcome to Queen's Park representatives from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and several archbishops, who are here at Queen's Park today to meet with their MPPs. Their coming to Queen's Park is an important part of the legislative process, since it allows us to discuss ideas, issues and concerns.

As a former teacher, trustee and education minister, I know the privilege and pride that come with being involved in the education of the next generation of Ontarians. On behalf of my colleagues, I want to thank all the individuals who are here today, on this Catholic education lobby day, for the outstanding contributions that each one of them has made to motivate, inspire and challenge young minds. Catholic schools have been educating students in mind, body and spirit since before the birth of the province, and they have provided educational excellence.

So I say to you, on behalf of Mr. Hudak and my caucus, congratulations on a job well done. We were pleased that Premier Davis extended full funding to Catholic schools. I hope we can all join them later for a reception.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the government, I want to say no congratulations on the recent decision by Legal Aid Ontario to regionalize services in communities across Ontario. As you know, Mr. Speaker—I imagine that members of the government know about this—Legal Aid Ontario provides legal services to people under a certain income to defend themselves in court when it comes to particular charges they may have upon them.

The problem we now have is that if you're living in a community somewhere—in my case, in northern Ontario, be it Kirkland Lake, Kapuskasing or Timmins—you will

no longer be able meet up front with somebody who has to make the decision about whether, at the end of the day, you are going to get representation from Legal Aid Ontario. Instead, what you're going to have to do now is call a 1-800 number in Sudbury in order to talk to somebody over the phone about your case and why you need to have—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's all right. I notice the clock isn't going, but I'll limit myself to two minutes.

You'll have to pick up the 1-800 number, call somebody in Sudbury and make your case over the phone as to why you need to get representation from Legal Aid Ontario. Should a decision go against you, it will be much harder for you to appeal in order to get legal aid to represent you.

I think this is a travesty when it comes to justice. One thing we have in our democracy is that everybody who is charged under the law has an ability to be represented in court and to have their day in court. How are you to do that, especially those people who find themselves at the lower end of the socio-economic scale, if you're not able to get actual access to a lawyer because of circumstances?

I say to this government that this is a mistake. I think this will lead to more problems with people being under-represented in our courts, and it's a travesty of the legal representation these people need in order to defend themselves when they get to court. I call on this government to turn this around and to re-establish services and keep services in our communities so that we can get the services we justly deserve in communities outside the regional centres.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Bill Mauro: Like all communities, those in northern Ontario have been affected by the global recession, and our government is committed to building new economic opportunities in the north.

As an example, we opened Ontario's first diamond mine in the north in 2008, creating hundreds of new job opportunities. Now, our Open Ontario plan will build on that success by pursuing mining opportunities in the region known as the Ring of Fire. We will work together with First Nations communities, northerners and those in the mining industry to develop one of the largest chromite deposits in the world. We will work to open up other economic opportunities for northern businesses as well.

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For instance, northern Ontario, in my opinion, is the ideal place for clean water companies to develop their ideas and sell their technology to the rest of the world.

Additionally, our plan will increase spaces in colleges and universities to ensure that students and laid-off workers can get the college, university or skills training they need to find new jobs.

These are just some of the initiatives in our Open Ontario plan that are going to benefit all of Ontario,

including northern Ontario. Our government continues to work hard to help northern families through these difficult times.

I'd also like to highlight what we've done by increasing the northern Ontario heritage fund from \$60 million to \$80 million. I would suggest that this is no small feat given the serious economic circumstances that we find ourselves in. Refocusing that fund back on private sector job creation, which it was originally intended to do in the late 1980s—it had morphed into more of a public infrastructure fund. We've refocused it back on private sector job creation, with great benefits for northerners.

AUTOMOTIVE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

Mr. John O'Toole: A new state-of-the-art centre of excellence and research in manufacturing is nearing completion at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Durham. Dan Miles has advised me that Minister Flaherty and other dignitaries will be joining us on Friday for a tour of this excellent facility. The General Motors of Canada Automotive Centre of Excellence, also known as ACE, is a new \$99-million research and development facility. It will attract talent and ideas from around the world.

Our ACE includes one of the largest and most sophisticated climate wind tunnels on the planet earth. Arctic cold, desert heat and hurricane-force winds can be recreated in this five-storey building that will test vehicles, including wind turbines and other new manufactured products.

ACE is a partnership with UOIT—the University of Ontario Institute of Technology—General Motors of Canada, the Partners for the Advancement of Collaborative Engineering Education, and the governments of Ontario and Canada. I'd like to thank the new president of GM Canada, Kevin Williams; the president of Durham College, Don Lovisa; as well as the president of UOIT, Ron Bordessa. Gary Elfstrom is the centre's director of business development. John Komar is the director of engineering and operation.

I'm confident this House would like to extend its best wishes to the partners and staff for their continued success in operation. Durham region and its many partners—government, business and academia—are building a future opportunity. In today's highly competitive global market, Canada can take pride in the fact that Durham region has the ACE up its sleeve. Durham has the right skills in the right place and the right people at the right time. It's Durham's time to share in the future of Ontario.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Pat Hoy: Our government's Open Ontario plan contains many important initiatives that build new opportunities for jobs and growth in rural communities. Last year, we launched an aggressive stimulus plan that is building roads, bridges and community centres in our

rural communities. Now we are going to do even more to ensure that rural Ontario is ready to seize on the opportunities that are emerging from the global recession.

For example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will continue to support opportunities to encourage Ontarians to buy local. We will also work with our agri-food sector to seek new markets for Ontario-grown produce.

Our Green Energy Act is already creating economic opportunities in rural communities. We are going to build on that momentum by creating new opportunities for clean water entrepreneurs to sell their clean water technologies to the rest of the world, creating good jobs in rural communities. Families will also benefit from our new spaces for students that we are creating in our colleges and universities this fall.

These are great initiatives that will help our farmers and rural communities thrive in the new global economy. I am proud to support our government's Open Ontario plan.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I am very pleased to hear how our government's Open Ontario plan will open up new economic opportunities that will create more jobs and grow our economy. For example, we are going to capitalize on the global demand for clean water technology. We will help clean-water businesses develop their technology and sell it to the rest of the world, which will help create high-skilled, well-paying jobs for Ontarians.

In addition to that, our Green Energy Act has made us North America's leader in clean energy. Support for both Verdant Power and Canadian Bio Pellet, companies now establishing in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, are great examples of this government's commitment to green industry. In the next five years, this government will support a cluster of clean-technology companies that will build their goods here and sell them to the rest of the world.

Another important concept of our plan is our tax reform package, which has received support from economists and Ontario business associations. The harmonized sales tax, in addition to business tax cuts, will result in new jobs and make our province more attractive for new business investments.

These are just a few of the examples of how, with the Open Ontario plan, we will strengthen our economy and create more jobs.

I support our government's plan for building a stronger Ontario, and I look forward to the budget tomorrow.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Our government's Open Ontario plan recognizes that diversity is one of our province's greatest strengths. It gives our businesses a competitive advantage by allowing us to share our ideas with the world and bring new ones to the province of Ontario.

We want to facilitate this advantage even more by making Ontario a classroom for the world. We're going to increase the number of international students at our colleges and universities by 50%. These international students bring unique experience to the classroom. They also give an important boost to our economy and help us forge partnerships in a global economy.

What's more, we're going to pursue new trade opportunities for Ontario businesses. For example, by 2030, there will be a 40% gap between global supply and demand for water. This is a great opportunity to sell our clean water ideas and products to the rest of the world.

What's more, by being open to new investment opportunities in emerging economies like India, China and Pakistan, we can take advantage of the rapidly changing global economy and create more jobs for Ontarians.

These are all important initiatives for our province, and I'm proud to support our government's Open Ontario plan.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like all members to join me in welcoming some future leaders, who are seated in the east and west galleries. I had the opportunity to speak with them today and officially welcome the students from Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate Institute to Queen's Park. Enjoy your afternoon.

Also, welcome to the family visiting from Chicago. Enjoy your visit to Queen's Park, and thanks for coming and touring in Ontario.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My kind of town.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is a fun city.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38, the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer given by the Minister of Labour concerning labour appointments. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES SERVICES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN ESSENTIELS

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to resolve public transit services labour disputes without strikes or lock-outs / Projet de loi 15, Loi visant à régler sans grève ni lock-out les conflits de travail au sein des services de transport en commun.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. David Caplan: For a very short statement.

Public transit, whether one is a transit user or not, is vital to the health and economic well-being of our city and, indeed, our province.

Since 1974, the TTC has had nine strikes and work-to-rule campaigns, including an illegal walkout in 2006, a two-day strike—

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The standing orders make it very clear what constitutes the comments by a person presenting a bill for first reading. They do not constitute a speech or a debate on the matter. In fact, we had agreed at one point that the explanatory note was to be the basis for that. This goes far beyond what the standing orders contemplate for that brief explanation. This is a political statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Welland for his point of order, and he is correct. I will remind the member, and take this opportunity to once again remind all members, that when they are introducing bills, they are to read the explanatory note.

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Mr. David Caplan: Thank you, Speaker.

There was also an eight-day job action in 1991.

If enacted, the Essential Public Transit Services Act will prohibit strikes and lockouts in connection with labour disputes between the Toronto Transit Commission and its employees, and will provide a means to resolve the disputes by arbitration. The bill will also authorize the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations extending the regime to any other public transit service in the province of Ontario.

I say, enough is enough. Citizens all over the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I would remind the member not to challenge the Chair, please.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following change be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr. Ruprecht, Mr. Sergio and Mr. Colle exchange places in

order of precedence such that Mr. Ruprecht assumes ballot item number 5, Mr. Colle assumes ballot item number 8 and Mr. Sergio assumes ballot item number 38; and that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items number 5 and 8.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just like to take this opportunity to remind all members that when they do present a petition, they are to be certified by the table. I don't want to have to be a schoolmarm checking out your petitions.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by the good citizens of Cambridge which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government created the local health integration networks; and

"Whereas the mandate of the LHINs includes providing funding to a hospital; and

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital's deficit of \$6 million is largely due to fixed costs beyond its control; and

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital is serving an ever-larger population; and

"Whereas operating rooms and in-patient surgeries will be closed, vital services lost, and jobs lost will impact the economy of Cambridge;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government sufficiently fund the Waterloo-Wellington LHIN and the Cambridge Memorial Hospital to ensure that Cambridge residents have full access to all hospital services to which they are rightfully entitled."

Pursuant to the standing orders, I sign the petition, among thousands signed by Cambridge.

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: In my hand there is a certified petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, good for you.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you.

"Whereas the health of the First Nations youth in Ontario is of growing concern;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To continue the partnership with the Right to Play partnership with the Moose Cree First Nation;

"To expand the Right to Play program to other First Nations communities; and

"To follow up these programs to ensure that other initiatives continue to promote the health of First Nations youth in Ontario."

I agree with this petition and attach my signature and send it to the table via page Jameson.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition that was a major issue during my by-election; it's regarding the harmonized sales tax. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Leeds-Grenville do not want the McQuinty 13% sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McQuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the McQuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McQuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I certainly agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we never want to see another tragedy like Walkerton ever again. The health and safety of Ontarians can never come second to profit and greed. Clean, safe drinking water is a right of all Ontarians and they should be able to enjoy that.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to upgrade our current water filtration system;

"To continue to monitor and test our water systems;

"To continue to strengthen Ontario's trust in the safety of our drinking water;

"To continue to invest in new systems and personnel to monitor and test our water;

"To never forget the mistakes of the past and always hold our water supply to the highest standard;

"To continue to invest in the health and safety of Ontarians through our water supply."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and give it to page Harsh.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure, as always, to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas residents of Durham do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes" and for their children, "and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000;"—in fact, it will be applied under \$500,000, as well—"and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province" of Ontario: "seniors, students, families," the frail elderly, "farmers and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition" humbly "the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families" yet again.

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this, and present it one of the pages, Jameson.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a unique opportunity to develop the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario and the Legislative Assembly should ensure us that this valuable resource is used to advantage all Ontarians while respecting the environment and rights of the First Nations people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To develop the natural resources in the Ring of Fire for economic benefit for Ontario;

"To ensure that the development of the Ring of Fire does so only within the guidelines of an EPA report;

"To respect the rights of the First Nations people and communities; and

"To work with local industry to bring employment to northern Ontario communities."

I agree with this petition and I will affix my signature to it, and send it to the table with page Alexander.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas elementary school-aged children in the province of Ontario suffering from diabetes require regular blood sugar monitoring and may also require insulin and glucagon to manage their disease; and

"Whereas there is no medical or nursing assistance readily available in schools as there was in the past; and

"Whereas the parents/guardians of these children must currently visit their child's school several times throughout the day in order to test their child's blood sugar levels; and

"Whereas the absence of medical support in our elementary schools results in substantial stress and disruption to the lives of children and their working parents;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That elementary schools in the province of Ontario have on-site staff trained in the daily monitoring of blood sugar levels of children who suffer from diabetes; and

"(2) That the trained staff also administer insulin and glucagon when required, with the consent of the child's parent/guardian."

I agree with this petition and I affix my name thereto.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Joe Dickson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas early childhood learning is a fundamental program in the development and education of Ontario's youth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to expand full-day learning across the province;

"To continue to make our children a priority for this government;

"To continue investments in the infrastructure of our education system;

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"To continue to support Ontario's families through these initiatives; and

"To never go back to the days of forgotten children and mismanagement of schools we saw in the 1990s. We applaud the new investments in full-day learning and look forward to their continued growth across the province."

I agree with this petition, I attach my signature to it and I pass it to Snigdha.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again on Canada Day 2010 with his new 13% combined GST, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% combined GST will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines, gas at the pumps, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, arena ice and soccer field rentals...." and a number of other ones listed here that I will not read;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government recognize Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I agree with this petition and affix my name thereto.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the worldwide demand for water is expected to be 40% greater than the current supply in the next 20 years; and

"Whereas Ontario has developed many new clean water technologies and practices since the Walkerton water contamination, which resulted from the poor water regulation practices of the former Conservative government; and

"Whereas Ontario has now implemented many new, improved practices for clean water regulation, developed better policies and fostered new clean water technologies; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's Open Ontario plan includes strategies to increase our province's ability to develop and sell clean water expertise and products to the rest of world;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government's plan to introduce a new Water Opportunities Act to take advantage of the province's expertise in clean water technology, create jobs and new economic opportunities for our province and help communities around the world access clean water."

As I support this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Norm Miller: If I may I'd just like to introduce my son, Stuart Miller, and his buddies Rayce Veitch and Rudy Olsson. That's his band. They're called Crimes in Paris and they're here visiting. A little promo there.

Now on a more serious note, I have a petition with thousands of signatures on it with regard to Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has undertaken an operational audit to identify efficiencies and reduce costs; and

"Whereas we recognize that the status quo is not an option; and

"Whereas rehab services are of paramount concern to the residents of the region where income levels exclude them from accessing other alternatives; and

"Whereas the deficit recovery plan will not balance the budget;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health provide additional operational funding of 5% amounting to \$3.4 million to ensure the continuation of services as described in the deficit reduction plan submitted to the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN dated January 29, 2010."

I support this petition and have signed it.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Pat Hoy: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas violent crime and gangs have been a problem in our communities; children require safe schools and safe streets in order to thrive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To continue with their support of the guns and gangs program;

"To continue to recognize the importance of a strong and educated police force;

"To continue to support rehabilitation programs;

"To continue to keep education as a top priority; and

"To continue to make our streets and schools safe places to be."

I have signed the petition.

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: "Whereas the McGuinty government's plan to harmonize the PST and the GST will result in Ontario taxpayers paying 8% more for a multitude of products and services;

"Whereas the 8% tax increase will increase the cost of services such as housing and real estate services, gasoline, hydro bills, home heating fuel, Internet and cable bills, haircuts, gym memberships, legal services, construction and renovations, car repairs, plumbing and electrical services, landscaping services, leisure activities, hotel rooms, veterinary services for the family pet and even funeral services; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers cannot afford this tax grab—particularly in the middle of a recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to abandon the sales tax increase announced in the 2009 budget."

As I am in agreement, I have signed this to give to page Ben.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Glen R. Murray: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we never want to see another tragedy like Walkerton ever again. The health and safety of Ontarians can never come second to profit and greed. Clean, safe drinking water is a right all Ontarians should be able to enjoy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to upgrade our current water filtration system;

"To continue to monitor and test our water systems;

"To continue to strengthen Ontario's trust in the safety of our drinking water;

"To continue to invest in new systems and personnel to monitor and test our water;

"To never forget the mistakes of the past and always hold our water supply to the highest standard;

"To continue to invest in the health and safety of Ontarians through our water supply."

I agree with this and will affix my name to it and give it to our legislative page Sabrina.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present yet another petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's plan to blend the PST with the GST into one 13% harmonized sales tax (HST) represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"This new tax, which we are calling the DST (Dalton sales tax), will raise the cost of a long list of goods and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax, including:" accounting and other services; "electricity; home heating oil and gas at the pump; haircuts; newspapers and magazines; Internet and cable; home renovations; heating; air-conditioning repairs; accounting, legal and real estate fees; condo fees; new home sales; rents will also go up; minor hockey registration fees will increase; and green fees and gym" memberships and fitness memberships;

"We, the undersigned," strongly "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That" Dalton McGuinty "not impose this" rigorous "new tax on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses" at this time in the economy of Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this, and present it to Leah, one of the new, young, intelligent pages here at Queen's Park.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Rick Johnson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the worldwide demand for water is expected to be 40% greater than the current supply in the next 20 years; and

"Whereas Ontario has developed many new clean water technologies and practices since the Walkerton water contamination, which resulted from the poor water regulation practices of the former Conservative government; and

"Whereas Ontario has now implemented many new, improved practices for clean water regulation, developed better policies and fostered new clean water technologies; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's Open Ontario plan includes strategies to increase our province's ability to develop and sell clean water expertise and products to the rest of the world;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government's plan to introduce a new Water Opportunities Act to take advantage of the province's expertise in clean water technology, create jobs and new economic opportunities for our province and help communities around the world access clean water."

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it and pass it to page Neale.

1540

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I wholeheartedly endorse this motion, and will be sharing my time with the member for Pickering-Scarborough East, who is very anxious to advance submissions with respect to this very important motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Pickering-Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm always pleased when my friend across the way from the riding of Durham recognizes my time and encourages me to stand in this place and use as much of it as is allocated to me. Having said that, I want to begin by similarly expressing my support, in a general context, of the motion we have before us today, and I want to make a preliminary comment before I move into some more specific comments.

When I travel, like many of us do, outside my home jurisdiction, whether it's somewhere in Ontario more

remote from Toronto, where my riding or my home sits in Pickering, next to Toronto, or when I travel outside the province in Canada or, in some cases, outside the country to other jurisdictions, I meet people and they ask, "Where are you from?" I don't start with, "I'm from Pickering," unless I happen to be in the greater Toronto area or the Golden Horseshoe. Once I get beyond there, my reference point is Toronto. If I travel outside this province and they say, "Where are you from?" I say, "I'm from the Toronto area." They say, "Oh, I know Toronto; where in Toronto?" So I can begin to whittle it down a little more precisely.

If I'm outside the country, in particular in the US or maybe somewhere else—not very frequently, mind you, but on occasion—certainly Toronto will be the first point of reference when someone says, "Where are you from?" It might be, "Well, I'm from Toronto, Canada." "Oh, yeah, I think I know where that is," and we can kind of whittle it down from there.

I open with those general comments, because I think it's important that we recognize in this debate how important Toronto is in the context of what we're going to be discussing here for those who don't do business here directly, don't necessarily know the geography directly, but recognize Toronto as a significant entity when you reference it to folks well outside of where you might be. It becomes our point of reference, and thus the point of reference, I think, for many others whom we want to influence in the context of what we do here in the province of Ontario.

I want to endorse the need, first, for a strong common securities regulator in this country, with its principal office being located here in Toronto. Securities regulation and enforcement are particularly important issues at this time, and I don't think we'll find much disagreement about that as we have our discussion this afternoon. We may, but I can't imagine that we'll have much difference of opinion in regard to security regulations as important issues at this time in particular, as we try to modernize our regulatory structures and create more effective enforcement tools for securities.

Ontario's financial services sector is already a world leader and a critical part of this province's economy. The sector itself employed some 365,000 people in Ontario in 2009, an increase in sectoral employment of some 60,000 jobs since 2003. In addition, the sector supports an estimated 280,000 ancillary jobs in the area of software design, in respect to financial market areas, and similar fields. So when we look at the quantum of employment involved with securities regulation and ancillary services, we're talking about 650,000 jobs.

Toronto is home to globally successful insurance companies. We're home to globally successful investment and pension funds. Canada's banks are largely based in Ontario and enjoy a global reputation as the soundest in the world. I think any of us in this place can easily reflect upon the last 18 months, upon the last 12 months, upon the last six months, and acknowledge the importance of the banking system to the stability that we've seen, but I

think more importantly, as we look beyond our borders, to the way others see Canada, see our banking system and see our capacity to manage our financial situation here in this country. Toronto is also home to five of the largest banks in North America by market capitalization and is the third-largest financial sector in North America, behind only New York and Chicago.

The McGuinty government is supporting the growth and expansion of this major sector of Ontario's economy, and continues to support it by investing in education and public infrastructure and by establishing a more competitive tax system and a more modern and more efficient provincial regulatory climate.

I've had the opportunity over the past half-dozen years here to serve as the parliamentary assistant to both Minister Duncan currently and, prior to my time at the finance ministry, to the then Chair of Management Board, currently the Chair of Cabinet and minister responsible for seniors, Gerry Phillips. In each of those instances, I've had the opportunity to watch and work with those gentlemen in respect to securities regulation.

I want to speak just briefly in regard to the Chair of Cabinet, Gerry Phillips, and his early role when I first came here—at least his early role from my context on my arrival, not his early role. He has played, I think, the lead role here in Ontario and throughout the country, in many ways, in encouraging and supporting the establishment of a common securities regulator. He believes, as we do, that that's a very important initiative. I think he took a tremendous leadership role in that regard across the country. I had a chance to see him in action in that regard and I just wanted to acknowledge his work, although the file is currently being carried by the Minister of Finance within that context.

An effective securities regulator promotes a culture of integrity and compliance that instills greater investor confidence in the capital markets, which in turn attracts capital and supports job creation. The key here is to acknowledge the fact that if you have a strong financial system, one that entrenches a culture of integrity, that builds on compliance and compliance skills and that creates investor confidence in the capital markets and attracting those dollars, then are you going to attract more investment, and that investment is going to create jobs.

This is more than just recognizing the importance of Toronto in the financial services sector in Canada. It's more than simply calling on the need to acknowledge Toronto as the logical home for a common securities regulator. It also speaks strongly about the need to build the economy in this province and in this country and what an important role Toronto, and Ontario in this instance, can play in doing that.

To promote growth in Ontario's economy, we need to send a very clear message to all business and entrepreneurs that Ontario is a safe and attractive place in which to invest. This is particularly important in today's global economy where we compete with jurisdictions from around the world for their investment dollars, their investment euros or the yen.

To that end, I want to recognize the excellent work that has been done by the Ontario Securities Commission during this very recent period of almost unprecedented market volatility and turbulence. Praise has legitimately been given to Canada's bank regulators for sparing this country from the abuse that has been seen in so many other jurisdictions. I believe that the provincial securities regulators, and most importantly ours here, the Ontario Securities Commission, also deserve considerable credit for allowing Canada's capital markets to continue to operate in a safe and effective fashion in the face of what we will all recognize as having been and continuing to be very challenging circumstances.

1550

The OSC has worked hard to promote integrity and compliance in Ontario's capital markets. During the past year, in response to upheavals in the market, the OSC has even increased the degree of vigilance that it normally proceeds with.

In the adjudication area, the number of hearing days for matters heard by commission tribunals rose by 48% in the last fiscal year. Investigations increased as well, with investigations of alleged breaches of securities law increasing by 23%. Now, that level of vigilance is always important, but increasingly so when people are anxious about how and where to invest. I believe the OSC has been and continues to send the right message about Ontario and the right message about Toronto. The number of concluded proceedings rose by 62%, with sanctions from these proceedings totalling some \$20.8 million in administrative penalties, the disgorgement of proceeds of violations, settlement amounts and costs.

Of course, enforcement is only part of what the OSC does to maintain market integrity. Preventing economic crimes from occurring may not make great news headlines, but it's a far more effective manner in which to deal with these issues than punishing offenders after crimes have occurred. Prevention is much better than punishment.

The OSC compliance efforts have intensified during and since the financial crisis first hit us, and one would not expect that, in the short-term, to diminish. As the financial crisis unfolded and impacted Canada's non-bank asset-backed commercial paper—or as we have come to understand it, the ABCP market—the OSC closely monitored the disclosure filings by public companies. The commission also conducted compliance reviews of major segments of the investment fund markets, including a number of fund managers of money market funds and non-conventional investment funds, to assess whether their portfolio holdings and exposures were subject to any ABCP-related risks. In addition, they looked at hedge fund managers to determine whether their funds posed any additional related risks to investors.

To assist the OSC, our government has also stepped up to meet these challenges through legislative changes that have made it easier for the OSC to take the necessary action when an enforcement order is issued by another jurisdiction, including orders made by courts and secur-

ities regulators in other provinces. I think that speaks well to the efforts that are being made, in Ontario and elsewhere, to find common ground with the objectives of establishing a common securities regulator. It's necessary that we work with other jurisdictions, and it's necessary that we look at our legislative structures to find opportunities where we can find greater co-operation and greater opportunity for the necessary enforcement.

Our government is laying the foundation for the financial services sector in Ontario so that Ontario can remain a growth engine that will continue to create thousands of high-paying jobs. We are providing the financial sector with support and flexibility to stimulate future growth while also protecting the interests of consumers and investors. Our government is partnering with the industry and other governments and has established the Financial Services Leadership Council, consisting of major financial sector CEOs and government leaders. The council will guide the work of the Toronto Financial Services Alliance as it implements a plan to improve the sector's competitiveness and make Toronto one of the top 10 financial sectors in the world.

Our government continues to pursue important measures to enhance regulation of Ontario's capital markets. In 2009, we implemented Securities Act changes and approved new OSC rules to update securities registration requirements, and registration and prospectus exemptions. These changes improve the transparency of Ontario's regulatory requirements and signal that Ontario markets are receptive to business and ready for investment.

In 2009 we also made changes to the Securities Act and the Commodity Futures Act to ensure the province and the OSC have the necessary tools to take immediate action to protect the public interest in the event of extraordinary circumstances involving a major market disruption. These changes position the government and the OSC to respond even more quickly to any future financial market crisis, the key being that as we see and have seen things unfold over the past year and a half to two years now, it's important that we act not only after the fact, but during those times, to avoid situations in the future that might put us in any particular jeopardy.

Just last month, in February, the OSC announced the creation of an investor advisory panel that will provide input on the work of the commission, including proposed OSC rules and policies, the OSC's annual statement of priorities, concept papers and specific issues. Input from a broad range of investors will assist the OSC in better understanding the needs of different investors and in developing policies that better protect investors.

Those of us in this place and throughout the province of Ontario have seen what has happened to investments that we've had in retirement-related portfolios, as an example. I think that for those who have the responsibility to ensure the level of integrity and compliance that comes with investment, it's important that we provide the necessary support—and that they do their work—through strategies like the investment advisory panel, to ensure

that we protect the investments of not only those who want to engage in the capital markets in large-dollar amounts, but effectively those individuals here in the province of Ontario who put their trust in the system with their financial future.

We're working as well with the credit union sector, the Deposit Insurance Corporation of Ontario and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario on an ongoing basis to address emerging issues and support the sector's growth and its competitiveness.

This follows the successful implementation on October 1, 2009, of a multi-year legislative project to modernize regulatory requirements, update investment and lending powers, and strengthen consumer protection.

Ontario has established the Centre of Excellence in Financial Services Education, and our government is working with the financial services sector and post-secondary institutions to attract foreign students and develop the best financial-sector talent possible.

I had an opportunity just recently to meet with someone at an event we were at; I believe, if I recall, it was sponsored by OPSEU. We had quite a good discussion about opportunities for bridging between the academic status of those young people, in most cases, coming out of the university sector, wanting to move into the financial sector and having developed this base of skill, this knowledge base, but not yet necessarily having the on-the-ground experience—talent—that's so necessary to move more effectively into roles of leadership.

As part of the financial services sector, there's a proposal that is effectively being made that speaks to how you bridge that gap. How do you take young people, whether they are foreign students or whether they are natural-born students here in Ontario, from their academic training and expedite their leadership opportunities in the financial services sector?

I think there are some pretty great opportunities here to take advantage of the educational structures that we have in place and the desire of the private sector effectively to partner to make the transition not only easier, but effective.

1600

As we know, Ontario has earned a well-deserved reputation as a safe place in which to invest. However, in today's dynamic and quickly evolving financial markets, we can't rest on our laurels. We must always try to do better, to be even more consistent, more efficient, but probably as importantly, more accountable. Capital markets are no longer provincial in scope. They're certainly national in scope, they're international in scope, and even global in scope. It's becoming increasingly difficult to regulate them solely at the provincial level. And yet that's what we're currently doing in Canada. The OSC is one of 13 provincial and territorial securities regulators in Canada. They in turn, though, work with various provincial and territorial police forces, as well as with the RCMP. Different laws in different jurisdictions are being individually interpreted and separately enforced in 13 different jurisdictions within Canada, and yet we're

dealing with a global economy and a global market for investment.

Multiple regulators can certainly lead to duplication and restrictions on information-sharing. No one would deliberately choose to regulate markets this way. In fact, Canada is currently the only major industrialized country without a national securities regulator. Our system is, quite frankly, outdated, cumbersome at best, and in need of a significant overhaul.

Our fragmented regulatory structure puts this province and our country at a competitive disadvantage when we try to attract that international investment, and increases the costs and administrative complexity for domestic businesses and domestic investors. Frustration with this particular structure is widespread, and within the business and investment community it continues to grow. In a recent survey, 92% of Canadian CFA Institute members agreed that the current securities regulatory system should be reformed.

Colleagues on both sides of this Legislature know the Ontario government has long supported a single securities regulator for Canada. It would reinforce Canada's otherwise strong international reputation for excellence in the regulation of our financial institutions. The McGuinty government believes that a single regulator would enhance Canada's competitiveness in global capital markets, which would in turn promote prosperity in all provinces and territories.

It would seem rather obvious, if virtually every other major jurisdiction in the world has a common regulatory structure, that 13 in a country as small, in relative terms, as Canada would be far too many. There's no question about the duplication that occurs; there would be no question that different sets of rules and regulations in each one would be interpreted differently in each of those jurisdictions. Can you imagine trying to do business in multiple jurisdictions and dealing with those multiple sets of rules in a nation as small, relatively, as Canada?

Therefore, one can be heartened by the progress that has been accomplished recently on this front. A Canadian Securities Transition Office has been established by the federal government, charged with collaborating with the provinces and territories and developing and implementing a transition plan for a Canadian securities regulator. Although the structure of the new regulator is still in progress and references to the courts on relevant constitutional questions have yet to be heard, work on the transition to a national regulatory system is well under way.

Two of the appointees that the federal government has named to the transition office are Bryan Davies, a former provincial Deputy Minister of Finance, and Larry Ritchie, presently a vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. Ten interested provinces and territories nominated representatives who have been appointed to the advisory committee of participating provinces and territories to this body.

We know that a Canadian securities regulator with the right structure would offer many real benefits to our economy. It would reduce the cost and increase the

efficiency of capital market regulation in Canada. Less time spent communicating and coordinating with other securities regulators would allow for more time spent on overseeing and monitoring market participants. That's why our government is actively working with the federal government and other interested provinces and territories to put in place a Canadian securities regulator. This province has consistently advocated for a strong common securities regulator to strengthen regulations, bolster investor confidence and enhance the competitive position of our capital markets.

Given the significant role that Ontario's financial sector plays in Canada's capital markets, our government strongly believes that the principal office and centre of operations of the new regulator should be in Toronto.

Toronto is the business and financial capital of Canada. It is the centre of the nationwide capital market and Canada's link to international capital markets, which are becoming increasingly global in nature. Toronto is the securities industry capital of Canada, employing more people than in Canada's next five largest cities combined. Just let me repeat that: Toronto is the securities industry capital of Canada, employing more people than in Canada's next five largest cities combined, those cities being Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa and Winnipeg.

Toronto offers obvious advantages as home to the new national regulator. This city is home to some of the largest participants in Canada's capital markets, and these include the TSX, the eighth-largest equity market in the world based on market capitalization. The six alternative trading systems operating in Canada are all based in Toronto. We are home to Canada's five largest banks. Two of the largest 10 global insurers plus three of the four largest Canadian property and casualty insurers find their home in Toronto, as do 58 pension fund managers—including the CPP Investment Board—and 119 securities firms. The list is not only long but impressive.

Toronto is the headquarters and home to the senior management of national associations such as the Investment Industry Association of Canada, the Investment Funds Institute of Canada, Advocis, and the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. The Toronto chapter of the CFA Society is the second-largest chapter of this influential global organization. Toronto is the headquarters of two national self-regulatory organizations for the securities industry: the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada and the Mutual Fund Dealers Association of Canada.

And of course, Toronto is home to the Ontario Securities Commission, the largest securities regulator in Canada, with approximately 475 permanent staff who represent a unique Canadian pool of specialized security expertise in compliance, oversight and enforcement.

At times, I almost want to go back a page or so so that I can reread into the record the list of expertise that already exists here in Toronto.

Situating the principal office and centre of operations of a Canadian securities regulator in Toronto would contribute to the city's global stature.

1610

I began my comments talking more personally about when I travel outside this small jurisdiction we're in, as I know some of us do, and people recognize where we're from, in many cases, by virtue of our point of reference. If we're outside of the country, we reference Canada, and then we often reference—those of us here, where we work or do business—Toronto as a centre that people will recognize. Simply put, its wealth of financial institutions, its strength of financial associations, its depth of expertise and its proximity to other major North American markets make Toronto the most logical and practical choice.

I didn't comment on our proximity to other major markets, and will just briefly. We speak about New York, Chicago and Toronto as being the three largest markets in North America. If we look at Toronto and its geography and begin drawing rings around it, we can see its proximity to capital investment, to industrial growth and to those other markets that are so important. Toronto is best positioned in this country for that purpose.

The McGuinty government will continue its work with the federal and provincial governments to establish a common securities regulator that functions co-operatively throughout Canada and fairly captures the importance and strength of local offices while also having its major presence here in Toronto, reinforcing Toronto's role as the centre of financial and capital markets in this country of Canada.

Today I'm calling on members of the Legislature to endorse the need for a strong national securities regulator. I'm also calling on members to support the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the global leader in financial services and, as such, locate the principal office and centre of operations of the Canadian securities regulator in Toronto.

Ontario's strength, including its people and its strong capital markets, will ensure that our province continues to be a leader in the global economy. By working together, we will ensure that this happens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I would like to inform the House that the late show requested earlier today by the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has been withdrawn. I know the House shares my disappointment.

Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to speak to the government motion this afternoon. The motion is that "the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs."

Why are we debating this motion this afternoon? Well, it could be because the debate on the speech from the throne ended early and the government has no further

business to debate. Or it could be that perhaps they're just trying to create some sort of cover in case they're unsuccessful in securing the home of the national securities regulator in Toronto, where it should be. Or perhaps the government likes playing silly games—we've seen them do this before—where they bring in another Liberal wedge motion. In this case, they want us either to go on record as being against the federal Conservatives' desire to establish a national securities regulator, or they want us to support the McGuinty government's latest fluff announcement that was in the throne speech, and that's the new Open Ontario plan.

When I call the latest announcement fluff, you just need to look at the record in past throne speeches—past commitments they've made in throne speeches—to realize why I'm not putting too much weight on this latest commitment from the throne speech about the Open Ontario plan. They made a commitment of some 35,000 long-term-care beds in a past throne speech, and what have we seen? We've seen very few of them built. Most of the long-term-care beds that have been built by the McGuinty government were ones that weren't finished from the commitment made by the past PC government: Of the 20,000 long-term-care beds being built and the 16,000 rebuilt beds, some of those got finished within the time frame of the McGuinty government. But very few of the 35,000 that were promised in the throne speech have actually been built, and that's despite the fact that since 2005 the wait-list for long-term-care beds has gone from 12,000 in 2005 to some 26,000 in 2010. It's more than doubled.

They promised to shut down coal-fired electrical generating stations. In fact, that's one that's been made many, many, many times.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes. Their plan to conserve electricity, as the member from Timmins–James Bay is telling me from the side here, is to shut down most industry. They've been very successful at that. That's the consolation prize. Put the prices up so high, create conditions where business can't survive, and you end up conserving electricity because all the plants in northern Ontario, as the member from Timmins–James Bay will state, are shut down, most of the mills. Where is that ore from the Ring of Fire going to be milled, is what I'd like to know, because with our high electricity prices that the McGuinty government's bringing in, the danger is it's going to be in Quebec or Manitoba where they have more reasonable electricity prices, despite the promises of the many thousands of jobs they claim are going to be created by the Green Energy Act.

The other promise they made in the throne speech is to reduce red tape.

I am going to be sharing my time with the member from Thornhill and also the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. Thanks for that reminder, Deputy Whip.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's why you've got deputy whips, Norm.

Mr. Norm Miller: That's right.

They promised to reduce red tape in a previous throne speech, and yet the Canadian Federation of Independent Business states that the cost of red tape is some \$11 billion a year. It's a real drain on job creation, particularly for small business. The Certified Management Accountants of Ontario surveyed members: Half of them say that in the last few years under the McGuinty government red tape has gotten worse. So that promise was obviously one that wasn't kept.

What's happened to the five-point economic plan we heard so much about?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I've been waiting for the member now for about five minutes to speak to the motion.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you. The Speaker is very—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With all respect, he was speaking to the motion because the motion talks about the government's plan referred to in the throne speech, which gives this debate quite a large latitude.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I requested that he speak to the motion. I will be the one who determines whether he is speaking to the motion.

Member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Speaker.

Yes, I was relating it to how the Open Ontario plan was part of the throne speech and I was pointing out how the government has made numerous commitments in past throne speeches—I was outlining a number of them—which have not been kept. So I think it does relate to the recent promise to do with the Open Ontario plan.

As I say, they used to have the five-point economic plan. They now have the five-year economic plan. I expect that tomorrow we'll be hearing about the seven-year plan to eliminate the deficit, that is, as compared to last year's five-year plan to eliminate the deficit. That means that we're looking at nine years with a deficit; that is, if we believe the latest plan.

On that latest deficit reduction plan, they're planning on returning to a balanced budget in fiscal year 2017–18—or that is what has been leaked out in advance of tomorrow's budget. I would just like to point out that that is two provincial elections from now. So hopefully the people of this province will have figured out by then that this government's plans, promises, throne speech commitments and budget announcements aren't worth the paper they're written on. Hopefully the people will have come to their senses and will have elected a Tim Hudak PC government by that point, a government that will keep its commitments.

Getting back to the motion for today, though, I would actually like to move an amendment to the motion. I move that the motion be amended by deleting the words “endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling” and substituting the word “calls” therefore. If I could get a page to take this amendment to the table.

1620

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Miller has moved that the motion be amended by deleting

the words “endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling” and substituting the word “calls” therefore.

Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: That would mean the new amended motion is going to read: “That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and calls on the federal government to recognize Toronto’s role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs.” You’ll note that the open-for-business fluff part of it has been taken out of the motion.

I would like to come back more directly to the motion now—as I’m sure the Speaker will be happy to see—and talk about why Toronto should be the centre for this national securities or single securities regulator. It should be noted that Canada is the only major country in the world without a single securities regulator. As was noted by the previous government speaker, I think there are 13 securities regulators in the country.

I’ve heard some rumours that some members of the third party—and they’ll be speaking next—will be calling on the national securities regulator to be located in their ridings. The member from Timmins—James Bay is going to suggest perhaps Timmins—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hearst.

Mr. Norm Miller:—or Hearst as the centre for the national securities regulator. I suppose I could make a pitch for Huntsville, Ontario. After all, it’s going to be the centre for the G8, coming up in June. The world focus will be there.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: Good point. It could be Parry Sound as well, because I’m sure all those involved in the financial services industry would love to be on the beautiful coast of Georgian Bay if they’ve got any spare time. However, I do recognize that Toronto is the natural location for the national securities regulator, not just for Ontario, but for the country.

Let me give you some background on Toronto and the financial services industry. The city of Toronto is recognized as Canada’s national centre for financial services. It’s home to the headquarters of Canada’s five largest banks and about 80% of the headquarters of foreign banks that operate in Canada. The Toronto Stock Exchange is the largest in Canada. Toronto has a concentration of 1,700 financial services firms.

Employment in the sector has grown steadily between 1983 and 1999, growing about 97,000 to 130,000 through those years. It has consistently employed between 9% and 11% of Toronto’s total employment for the past decade. Shifts in the sector include decreases in employment in bank and trust company branches, leading to the doubling of head offices for bank and trust companies. There are strong linkages between the sector and supporting institutions also situated in Toronto.

All of Canada’s large banks are actively pursuing the US and international markets, and Canadian banks have

an international reputation as leaders in e-commerce applications and continue to invest billions of dollars in IT, product development and employment. Toronto’s strengths include: the existing concentration of the financial services cluster; the linkages that exist within and between industry groups; a large, available skilled labour pool; and an existing critical mass of financial services and educational institutions. Strengthening the cluster must include recognizing the importance of Toronto’s financial services cluster.

Now let’s consider the impact of Liberal policies and behaviours. Liberal financial policies have done little to strengthen Ontario’s position. Their tax-and-spend ways have resulted in Canada’s worst government, accruing Canada’s worst deficit, although that number seems to be changing daily, even before the budget planned for tomorrow.

When first elected, the McGuinty Liberals rolled back planned tax cuts for seniors, families and businesses. They added scores of regulations, increasing the red tape burden for small business. They increased the public sector job growth, outstripping private sector job growth. They increased the public sector by over 200,000, eight times the rate of the private sector.

To add insult to the industry, a direct hit to the financial services sector, there is the application of the HST on mutual fund management fees, where the cost to the sector is expected to be about \$300 million, which, in this economy, may be all it takes to drive the mutual fund companies out of Ontario.

I’d like to revisit that point for a moment: The new HST, planned to come into effect July 1, will add that tax on the management fees on mutual funds. So here you have the 60% to 70% of the population that don’t have defined benefit plans trying to save for retirement, and now there’s going to be this extra fee on management fees, making it harder to put money aside for retirement, harder to build that nest egg. Also, for the industry and the country, the risk is that the companies will end up moving to Alberta, where there is no tax.

Also, another point I would like to make is that when I met with the industry, not just Ontario but Canada as a jurisdiction where there’s a value-added tax is unique in the world, in terms of taxing the management fees on mutual funds. I think it’s something that needs to be looked at, especially in light of the fact that for somebody who’s trying to save through an RRSP, the maximum they can put into their RRSP is 18% of their pay, whereas if you are in the public sector and you have a good pension, the value of that defined benefit pension plan is about 34%, almost double the maximum you’re allowed to put into your RRSP. People in that 60% to 70% of the population are struggling to come up with enough money. This fee, the HST, on management fees will make it more challenging. But the greater danger in the discussion we’re having this afternoon is that we will lose the companies, which will move to other jurisdictions. That is a real worry to us.

On debt and deficits, the numbers keep changing, but without a doubt the most serious concern is the insidious,

toxic impact of a long-term structural deficit, which is what it looks like has been created by the McGuinty government.

The growth of our provincial debt is, along with job losses, the single biggest economic challenge facing Ontario. In the fall economic statement, the Minister of Finance confessed that the deficit was \$24.7 billion. He just announced an hour ago or so that it's now going to be \$21.3 billion. I just did an interview on CBC Radio and I described this as being "fun with numbers." We started out the year—the deficit in last year's budget, if you read it, was \$14 billion. In June they switched the number; it was going to be \$18 billion. In September they said it was going to be \$24.3 billion. And now the good news: It's only \$21.3 billion the day before the budget comes out. I think any observer would say the government has lost all credibility when it comes to their numbers and their budgeting process.

That deficit is bigger than all the other provinces' combined. This represents a danger to Ontario's fiscal health, with long-term taxation and service impacts that will be borne by our children and our grandchildren. Despite that, the speech from the throne gave little attention to the deficit and debt. In fact, there were some three lines, 24 words, that were dedicated to it.

Of course, we do have the budget happening tomorrow, so we can wait and see, and hope that something is going to happen in tomorrow's budget. But if it's like the previous budgets or economic updates, I don't have much confidence that we'll see a restraint in spending. The spending record of the government is not good. They've increased spending 65%. We're on track to double the debt of the province by 2012. That means that if this government makes an attempt to balance the budget, it will be on the revenue side of the ledger. And to date the ideas that we have heard have been less than inspiring.

1630

As I've said, I am sharing my time with a couple of members whom I mentioned, from Thornhill and Wellington-Halton Hills, and I think also from York-Simcoe. There may be time for the member from York-Simcoe as well, so I'll get her riding on the record as well.

In conclusion, Dalton McGuinty has failed this province; he has failed Ontario's families, seniors and businesses. I'm not confident that he will maintain Toronto's place as the headquarters for our financial services sector. So far, Toronto has remained the financial centre of Canada despite the policies of the McGuinty government, but I'm pleased to support the amended motion to recognize that Toronto is the perfect location for the proposed national securities regulator to be located.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Good afternoon to all of our fellow Ontarians watching on the Ontario legislative channel. We're going to entitle this segment, "Your tax dollars at work." I received this motion, like everybody

else, about 24 hours ago. I've got to tell you, my feeling on reading it was that I was offended. It's 24 hours later, and I'm still offended. The reason for that is, this motion, as it was originally worded prior to amendment, is a snooker motion. It has a Catch-22 in it. About 24 hours ago, we had also voted on the throne speech. Our party and the third party voted no to the throne speech. The throne speech embodied the concept of the Open Ontario plan.

This motion, the way it's worded, reads, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator"—and here's the salient part—"and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry," and it goes on. That phrase, if we vote for the motion as it stands, puts us in the position of turning around the vote that we stood on yesterday, where we said, "No, we're not buying into the McGuinty government's Open Ontario plan." So I'm put in the position, if that's the wording of the motion prior to the amendment, of being told that if I don't vote for this, I'm not for Toronto as the seat of the common securities regulator, and if I do vote for the motion, then I'm turning around my vote on the Open Ontario plan and voting for the throne speech. That's a Catch-22, and I and, I can tell you, the Tim Hudak Conservative caucus are not going to be caught that way. That's the reason why my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka has put forward the amendment.

I must say, and I would like to say to all members of this House and to the people watching, that the concept of a common securities regulator is not a problem. The concept of creating out of Toronto what is already de facto here and now, inasmuch as it is the seat of financial activity in Canada: That doesn't bother us one little bit. That's just fine. All to say that if the motion had not had that little tidbit in it about endorsing the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry, we could have put this motion to the House and asked for unanimous consent, it would have been dispensed with in about 30 seconds, and we'd be on to other business. But it seems to me—and this is why I mentioned "your tax dollars at work"—that this Liberal government doesn't want to do things like that; it wants to take valuable time in this Legislature to have people like us stand up and debate this silly motion to waste time, just to take up time. Can you tell that there's a budget coming out tomorrow? The fact of the matter is that this government is single-handedly doing everything that it possibly can to drive business out of Toronto and out of Ontario, so the concept of a motion making sure that we put the seat of the financial business in Toronto in these circumstances is laughable.

While I'd love to say that I'm happy to rise in this House to speak to this issue, it gives me some pain to do so because, once again, we're dealing with a no-brainer. Should Toronto be the seat of financial activity in Canada? It is. Should we have a common securities regulator designation applied, and should this be located in Toronto? Yes. I think that you would get 107 out of

107 members of this House agreeing to that kind of idea. I think we do.

Similar to the bogus resolution on the economy that was debated in the fall of 2008 and the resolution earlier this year on federal transfer payments, we are wasting precious taxpayer-paid time talking about something that should be a given. Do you remember that debate—I use the term loosely—earlier this year? It ended in an hour and a half. It was on federal transfer payments. We were calling on the feds to do the transfer payment delivery. It was a no-brainer, so it didn't persist and didn't continue. It wasn't worthy of any debate, and it collapsed.

Going back to the nature of this resolution, why wouldn't Toronto be the natural site for the national securities regulator? Bringing this unnecessary resolution is proof that this government's agenda is void of substance—something we on this side of the House have been saying for months; indeed, for years.

The government continues to waste good debate time, which, I might add, is paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, to talk about non-issues, instead of pressing issues like jobs and the economy. Did I say “jobs and the economy”? While I know my colleagues on the other side of the aisle think they are being clever with this resolution, it really is just a repeat of what was already in the throne speech, which we voted against on principle.

Of course we want an Open Ontario, but we want details. We want to know what an Open Ontario means. We want a plan. The thing we haven't seen in six and a half years of McGuinty government power is a plan. No plan. So here we are.

We are now being asked by the Liberal Party, in what I consider an underhanded way, indeed a treacherous way, to endorse the Open Ontario plan, which we did already reject. We support the principle of the resolution: locating a common securities regulator here in Toronto. There's no problem with that. The PC caucus has never once said that it didn't support the selection of Toronto as the home of a national securities regulator. For me, Toronto, or at least the GTA, has been my home for the past almost 30 years, and it never occurred to me that we could consider anywhere but Toronto to be that. It is de facto the case. You want to formalize it? No problem. We support that too, but you're basically beating a dead horse.

What we don't support is the reference in the motion that calls for the endorsement of the Open Ontario plan, and I cannot repeat that strongly enough or more often. One really has nothing to do with the other, and if what you're doing here is presenting a snooker motion, as I have suggested, perhaps you've snookered yourselves.

The federal government, Ontario and the majority of other provinces support the need for a common securities regulator. If it were to go anywhere else, maybe such a consideration would be owing to the fact that this government is not making Ontario as friendly, by any stretch of the imagination, as it could possibly be for any branch of the investment community. It follows logically, then, that Toronto would be the location of that national securities regulator.

It is known to everybody that the financial services industry is centred in Toronto and, therefore, in Ontario now. But this Liberal government clearly needs to be reminded how this came to be. It's because successive Progressive Conservative governments, over a 40-year period, created the economic conditions that invited industries, like the financial services industry, to Toronto, to Ontario, allowing them to compete and thrive.

When you decide that you're going to pick winners and losers to create an industrial base for the province, when you essentially buy jobs or buy investment, when you go out and provide special incentives to the Sam-sungs and Ubisofts of the world, that's when you start to reverse what we worked so hard to do. And when I say “we,” I don't only mean Progressive Conservative governments; I mean the people of Ontario, hard-working people who deserve to have the kind of climate that affords them and their families a future, good jobs and a continuing income. By keeping business taxes competitive, keeping taxes on new investment low and providing reliable, affordable energy, Progressive Conservative governments created the climate required, that saw Ontario become the economic engine of Confederation, which that side has done everything it could to negate for the past six and a half years. Sadly, this Liberal government has not only eroded all of Ontario's past successes, but they are now, according to Terence Corcoran, “Canada's worst government”—Canada's worst government.

1640

It has reduced, at this point, the debate in this House to what you might term stuff and nonsense. I'm standing here and debating something that is not worthy of debate. The reason we're talking about this is because the motion has been put forward, and it has been put forward in such a way that it demands commentary—stuff and nonsense, indeed, that is not contentious, as far as the opposition is concerned.

We're in Toronto right now. We're in a chamber that's located in the middle of Toronto. Down the street, Bay Street, the financial district, the hub of this country for the past 100 years, continues to thrive, notwithstanding the things you're doing to see to it that it doesn't.

Why are we debating something that we have always agreed on? I'll tell you why: We're debating this so that the government doesn't have to debate or address the real issues that are besetting Ontario today, like bringing jobs back to Ontario; like delivering affordable, quality health care; like delivering reliable and affordable energy.

If this government really wants to debate something of substance that is relevant to the financial services sector, we should be debating why the McGuinty Liberals are hammering financial services with the harmonized sales tax. Let's talk about that. You want the financial community to be healthy? You have to give it conditions that allow it to thrive. Besides the fact that this is a tax on savings and a tax on seniors, many of whom are on a fixed income, it's a tax on the financial services sector.

Interjection: Who support it.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You can talk about whether they support it if you want. But you go talk to the people

who, over the course of the past year or year and a half, have had their savings decimated in a global recession, and tell them that they have to put their money into mutual funds that, as of July 1, will carry an additional 8% on the management expense ratio, and then you tell me that there's broad-based support.

Let's talk about some positives in favour of Toronto for a couple of moments and put them on the record. Toronto is the heart of Canada's financial services sector. It is home to five of Canada's largest domestic banks, 55 foreign bank subsidiaries and branches, 119 securities firms. This is right now—if you don't scare them away—headquarters to Manulife and Sun Life, two of the top 10 life insurers worldwide; the base of the TMX Group, commonly known as the Toronto Stock Exchange; headquarters for three of the four largest property and casualty insurers in Canada, and for the operations of seven of the top 10 largest global hedge fund administrators.

The city has the largest Wi-Fi zone in Canada, a total of six square kilometres, all surrounding the financial sector of the community, so that people can be mobile and do business wherever it is; sit down on a park bench with a laptop and do their trading in Toronto, the de facto heart of the financial services sector.

Look at the mutual fund industry; look at what you're doing to it with your HST. If you take \$200,000 in savings and invest it in mutual funds, the HST, which is the net difference on that—and let's face it, \$200,000 in savings is not enough for anybody to retire on—is going to cost you \$400 annually, net new money, just on the management fee that you're paying for that level of investment. So don't tell me that the HST doesn't have an impact, and don't believe that that impact doesn't further impact the reliability and the go-forward of the financial services industry in Toronto.

A recent Mackenzie Financial report estimates the cost of the HST for a \$100,000 portfolio will be almost \$2,500 over the course of 10 years, and on larger portfolios much, much more.

Last year, Canadians paid \$450 million more in taxes on their mutual funds due to the GST alone than they would have paid on non-taxed financial products—and this is according to the Investment Funds Institute of Canada. Since the GST's inception in 1991, consumers have paid \$5 billion in aggregate sales taxes on mutual fund products. If Ontario and BC harmonize their taxes as planned, sales tax rates will grow by 160% in Ontario and 140% in BC. Mutual funds and other managed pools will be taxed at four to five times the rate of GICs, equities, term deposits and other non-fund investment vehicles. The HST will be hidden from investors because of an Ontario Securities Commission requirement for fund managers to report a single management expense ratio that covers all costs, including taxes.

In brief, what we're doing with an HST is the antithesis of what this motion suggests we should be doing. We're pushing financial, corporate entities away from Ontario, away from Toronto. We may be the centre of the financial universe in Canada now, and a world

financial centre, but if this government doesn't get with the program, it may find that the question is not the one that the motion considers but rather whether the people who form that financial sector want to stay in Ontario. That's what we have to consider. That's at the basis for this motion and it's the thing that we're considering.

By all means, we'll vote for the motion, as amended, but if you leave the Open Ontario nonsense in it, the Progressive Conservative caucus is not with you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Waterloo—Wellington—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Wellington—Halton Hills, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Wellington—Halton Hills. Thank you.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I was honoured to represent the people of Waterloo for a number of years. Unfortunately, redistribution has to some degree changed that relationship, but I try to keep in touch with my friends in Waterloo region, certainly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the chance to speak to this particular government motion that has been brought forward this afternoon. Initially it read, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs."

I'm aware that my colleague the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, who does an outstanding job as our finance critic, as well as our whip, has moved an amendment to the motion deleting the words "endorses the Open Ontario plan" because, of course, as we know, our caucus has just in the last day voted against the government's throne speech motion because we do not have confidence in this government.

I would like to return to the throne speech just for a moment because there was a reference in the throne speech, as you'll recall, Mr. Speaker, to this issue. In the throne speech, the Lieutenant Governor said:

"Your government also understands that the bedrock of our province's economy includes one of the strongest financial services industries in the world.

"Canada's banks—based here in Ontario—are widely recognized as the soundest in the world.

"Toronto is now North America's third-largest financial centre and home to 350,000 jobs. Ontario-wide, the sector supports 625,000 jobs.

"So your government is working with the Financial Services Leadership Council to support the industry and create a strategy to make Toronto one of the world's elite financial centres.

"And your government applauds the federal government's efforts to create a national securities regulator. It should be located in Toronto."

I was interested when I heard that in the throne speech because last year, in advance of the 2009 budget,

recognizing that the province, and indeed the western world, was experiencing a financial crisis and a huge economic challenge, I felt it was incumbent upon all of us as members of the Legislature, including members of the opposition, to endeavour to offer constructive ideas to the government and to work together across the aisle to try to help solve this problem, work together towards that end. I said that many, many times—and not only said that; I also endeavoured to do it.

1650

In a statement to the Legislature on March 11, 2009, just over a year ago, well before the 2009 budget was read into this House, I offered a number of specific suggestions that I thought should be considered by the government, and that should have been included in the 2009 budget. You can check Hansard, if you wish; it's there on March 11. I gave a number of suggestions.

Also, in the middle of my presentation that particular afternoon, I said: "They must develop a strategy to turn Toronto into the leading financial services city in the world." This was what I said in the Legislature on March 11.

It wasn't necessarily an idea that came to me out of the blue. I recall, quite vividly, seeing on the newsstand a few weeks before that the February issue of Toronto Life magazine. There was an article on the front page, the cover of the magazine, about the opportunity that was represented by the economic and financial crisis on Wall Street for Toronto to try and emerge as perhaps the leading financial services city in North America, if not the world. Because of the crisis on Wall Street, the lack of confidence because of the financial crisis, and the strength and soundness of our banks, we had a real opportunity. In fact, the article was called "The Good News About the Bad Times."

Having had a chance to review it again—again, it was in February 2009 that this article was suggesting that this was something we should consider. The writer of the article—his name is Philip Preville. During the course of the article, he indicates that he had a meeting with Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Finance. This would have been back in November 2008. You'll recall, Mr. Speaker, that the financial crisis and the stock market crash were in the fall of 2008. He met with Dwight Duncan in the boardroom of the Ministry of Finance, and apparently the minister was quoted as saying this: "I think it should be a goal for Toronto to rank among the top 10 in the world," he said. More than any finance minister in recent memory, Duncan, with his heavy, neckless frame, looks the part of a stereotypical banker—albeit a banker in bad times, with dark circles under his eyes. He'd spent the previous week in the riding he represents, Windsor-Tecumseh, an area heavily dependent upon the auto industry. It's starting to look like most of the 150,000 manufacturing jobs the province has lost in the past two years are gone for good. Ontario is now experiencing what the UK went through under Margaret Thatcher: a final, massive shift from manufacturing jobs to service jobs. In the new economy, Ontario doesn't

make stuff anymore. We let other places do that; our new job is to lend, invest, and manage people's money."

If, in fact, this article is correct—Dwight Duncan, sitting in his office in November 2008, talking to a writer who was going to write a story for Toronto Life magazine; Dwight musing out loud, saying that maybe we should try to find a strategy to make Toronto the financial capital of the world—you would have thought that we would have started, and embarked upon establishing the strategy at that time. You would have thought that perhaps it would have been announced in the fall economic statement, maybe; or if it wasn't announced in the fall economic statement, you would have thought that perhaps in the budget of 2009, there would have been a statement about the establishment of a working group or an expert panel or what have you to start to work on developing a strategy to make Toronto the leading financial services centre in North America, if not the world.

The idea was brought forward by one of the members of the Legislature, the member for Wellington-Halton Hills, in a letter that I sent to the minister and statements that I made in the House. Yet here we are, several months later, March 8, when the government finally announces it's doing it.

I would submit that the opportunity to create the strategy to develop Toronto as the leading financial services capital in North America, or the world, may very well be past. The fact is, the American investment banks, the Wall Street investment banks, have recovered. In many cases, they're paying back the bailout money that they borrowed from the American government, the American treasury and taxpayer. I would suggest, and I'm afraid to say, that the minister may very well be too little, too late.

Again, I can't understand why, if he was talking about this in November 2008, we didn't get going on it then. The strategy would be completed, and, theoretically, we would be in the process of implementing it right now. Unfortunately, we waited until March 8, 2010, to see the government actually wanting to something about this.

It's very troubling and disappointing. I hope we haven't missed the boat and I certainly wish the government well in terms of trying to create this strategy so that it's successful. I would once again suggest and submit that if we had gotten going on it many, many months ago, we would have had it finished by now and would probably be in a different position than we are today.

This motion that we are debating today was given to us as an opposition party just a little over 24 hours ago. In fact, when we were at caucus we were informed that this was what was going to be debated this afternoon, while we were having our caucus meeting at about 1 o'clock yesterday afternoon. Again it shows a government either unwilling or unable to co-operate with the opposition in terms of the normal courtesy of notice, or perhaps a government flying by the seat of its pants. I'm not sure which it is, but I suspect it's probably the latter—most likely the latter—because we have been getting along fairly well in terms of the House leaders' process and so forth.

But it's interesting how the House was called back in February and we're back in session and apparently the government doesn't have much of a legislative agenda. There are very few substantial bills before the House, so they have to come up with these creative resolutions to try to bring forward so they can fill an afternoon of debate. In some cases, these resolutions—in some cases, characterized as emergency debates—are initiated, debate takes place over a couple of days, and then the government doesn't call them again and they sit on the order paper, in some cases for months. No vote on the measure; no conclusion to it. Again, it's no wonder people are cynical about the way this place runs and what goes on here, but it is obviously troubling from our perspective on this side of the House.

I think my colleague the member for Thornhill made some very important points, and I'm sure the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka did; I just didn't hear his speech. But Peter Shurman talked about the fact that the HST will have an extremely deleterious and negative impact on our financial services industry in the province of Ontario. This is an issue that has been brought forward in the House and in the media and, I'm sure, in private meetings with the Ministry of Finance and the Minister of Revenue. Interestingly, the Minister of Revenue comes from a financial services background. As I understand it, he used to help people with their financial services planning. I don't know if he sold investment products, but he knows about this industry, for sure, having come from it, and he would know better than most the negative impact that this, the introduction of the HST, is going to have on the industry, yet he's the minister responsible for bringing forward the legislation and going around the province to defend it, which is the irony of ironies, but that's his role.

I would suggest to you that we should not be creating new impediments to people who want to save for their retirement, who want to save for the post-secondary education of their children, who want to invest in Ontario's economy or invest in the economy at large, because our savings rate, in my view, is too low in the province of Ontario. We all know the looming demographic challenges that the province faces with the aging baby boom going through, the demand that that's going to place on the health care system and on our pension systems and so forth. The fact is, we are not saving enough. Here, we know that the HST, when it's introduced—apparently, when it kicks in on Canada Day later on this year, it will have a negative impact on the financial services industry and make it harder for the Minister of Finance's dream of creating Toronto as a leading financial services centre in Canada.

I must say that I totally support the amendment to the motion that was brought forward by the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. Our party does not have confidence in this government. We do not have confidence in their ability to manage the economy successfully. We do not have confidence in their ability to encourage job creation. We do not have confidence in their ability to

manage their budget. We hear today that the budget deficit is actually \$21.3 billion, announced today, before the budget. Actually, the budgetary news should have been announced in the budget speech itself tomorrow, but for whatever reason they wanted to manage the news and they wanted to have some sort of news out there in advance today. The previous budget number was something like \$24.7 billion, if I'm not mistaken. They're now trying to say, "Oh, this is good news. We've got a slightly smaller budget deficit than we thought. We're doing a pretty good job. Let's pat ourselves on the back and tell the people what a great job we're doing, because the economy's improving."

1700

Again, it makes you wonder how sincere they were, how honest they were, in terms of the original budget deficit projection that they tabled in the fall economic statement last fall, when we were told the deficit was going to \$24 billion. Even if it is \$21 billion in fiscal year 2009-2010, even if that's the budget deficit when the books are finally closed later on this year in the summertime, I guess, that is still an absolutely massive budgetary deficit. In the hour that our party is debating this motion this afternoon, that means that as a province we are borrowing approximately \$2 million an hour, every single hour, every day, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, adding to the provincial debt, making the debt obligation to the next generation even more difficult, more pronounced and more profound.

I was reading the *Globe and Mail* today, and I was glad to see Jeffrey Simpson, who is one of our leading political commentators in Canada, talking about the fact that if we put off the tough decisions as a provincial government, if we deny or refuse to acknowledge the fact that we have this huge deficit problem, which is compounding, with every year's deficit added on to the mountain of provincial debt that has been accumulated over the years—and it appears that, by 2012, under this Liberal government's tenure of office, from 2003 till now, they will have doubled the provincial debt. It took how many years from Confederation, in 1867, to 2003 to accumulate the provincial debt that we had? And now they're going to double it in just a short period of time.

Obviously, that should concern us all. It concerns me as a parent who has children who are going to be, hopefully, growing up as Ontarians who want to participate in the economy, but certainly on our side of the House, we understand that these massive deficits and debts mean that the level of tax in the future is going to be punishing.

I would suggest that our generation has an obligation to future generations to live within our means, to make sure that we don't get into debt so deeply that the next generation is punished. I've been making this point for all of the 20 years I've been here, and I'm very disappointed that, unfortunately, since the McGuinty government has been elected, there has been very little in the way of spending restraint, very little in the way of recognizing that there might be an economic downturn down the road. They felt that they could spend money

with abandon, like there was no tomorrow, and, of course, in the fall of 2008, tomorrow arrived.

That is really what I wanted to say this afternoon. I do not support the Open Ontario plan of the government. I don't have confidence that they're going to be able to manage or provide the appropriate leadership that the province needs in the next 18 months. I look forward to the provincial election. I hope that the people of Ontario will see on this side of the House, and I believe that they will, the kind of leadership that's going to be required in the coming years in this decade to fix the problems that have arisen as a result of the neglect of the government since 2003 and to restore hope in the province of Ontario for the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member for York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to take the next few minutes to offer some comments on the motion that is being debated today. People need to understand that there are two parts to this motion: The first part says, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator," and the second part says, "and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial industries" etc. What I want to indicate here is that by the terms of our amendment that we have put forward, we've rejected the part about the endorsement of the Open Ontario plan.

I should just remind people that that part of this motion comes directly from the throne speech, which received its 12 hours of debate in the last few sessional days, and as a conclusion to that 12 hours of debate, we in the Progressive Conservative Party, Her Majesty's loyal opposition, voted against that. Clearly, then, putting this piece from the throne speech into today's motion is an opportunity by the government to, I guess, see if we're actually reading the motion, but certainly to try to slide in something else besides the main part of the motion, which is a strong national securities regulator.

The other part of this is "by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role...." I find it really interesting, because in virtually all opportunities that the government has to either blame the federal government or draw them into something, the current government makes sure that they use every possible opportunity to do so, and this motion is no exception.

I want to look at the part we can support, which of course is the need for a national regulator. When I read the motion—an earlier speaker referred to the fact that we didn't have much opportunity to review this motion, but as soon as I saw the motion, I remembered that I had the privilege of chairing the Standing Committee on Government Agencies in December 2008 when the Ontario Securities Commission came to the standing committee. I'm going to refer to information that was presented at that time, on December 2, 2008, by Mr. David Wilson, the CEO and chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. He had been called at a point, as everyone will recall, in December 2008, when markets around the world were reeling from the fiascos in part of

the banking system, particularly the American banking system, and people were very nervous in Ontario, as naturally they would be. The committee decided it was a timely opportunity to have the Ontario Securities Commission come before the committee and provide some insight and some confidence in the system that we have in Ontario. While most of the presentation obviously dealt with the day-to-day business of the Ontario Securities Commission, naturally it allowed for an opportunity to talk about Ontario and the need for a regulator.

I think there are two messages here where the government needs to recognize what is at stake. Mr. Wilson began here when he was talking about Ontario, and he said:

"We need to remember that Ontario is in competition with other markets and that competition is based on the efficiency, as well as the safety and integrity, of our markets for investors. If Ontario is too burdensome, too slow, too bureaucratic, then issuers—businesses that need capital—will simply go elsewhere. Ontario's financial services industry would then suffer, and this is a very important business for all of us.

"The financial services industry that we help regulate is essential to Ontario's economy. First, the investment industry has the vital function of efficiently allocating capital—people's savings—to businesses that can use it to grow and foster economic development. That's the alchemy of turning savings into jobs.

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"On its own, the financial services industry employs some 350,000 people in Ontario, jobs that are part of the knowledge economy. And it's estimated that the financial sector indirectly supports at least an equal number of jobs outside the sector. In the Toronto area alone, the financial services industry pays out more than \$10 billion annually in wages.

"The financial services industry paid \$2.6 billion in net provincial corporate tax last year, not including provincial sales tax, GST and other personal income taxes paid by its employees."

Here's an indication of exactly why I think people on this side of the House are very much in favour of endorsing the need for a strong national securities regulator and certainly recognize the importance of Toronto. But what concerns me is that part of the whole HST debate has a huge implication for the financial services industry. We have people, then, in the business in Toronto offering a very chilling warning that if they are faced with increased costs, an 8% increased cost to their customers, they are going to look for a more friendly jurisdiction.

What we know from our own information and from understanding what I just read from Mr. Wilson about competition with other markets is that this province is in extreme danger of in fact losing part of that financial leadership that we have, and one of the things about losing part is that then you lose it all.

So I think that while the notion of a regulator is something that has been discussed for in the neighbourhood of 40 years—and Mr. Wilson at a later point in

his testimony says that Canada is the only industrialized country in the world that doesn't have a national securities regulator. Obviously, the crisis of the fall of 2008 is a demonstration of the need for international co-operation and the kind of one voice that Canada needs. But I would say to you that there's a peril that is not spoken about in this motion today, and that is the danger of losing the financial services industry in this province. Then this motion would obviously become redundant. So I would suggest that the government needs to look at the very serious risk it is putting the financial services of this province in and to make it clear that that's not an issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've been looking forward for weeks to this debate. I anticipated it was coming and I stayed up all night thinking about the things that I wanted to say and just how important this whole debate is. I want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that I take my full time in this particular debate.

The motion reads, and I just want it for the record, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan"—which I'll speak to later—"to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs."

An interesting motion, considering the government probably has a number of pressing issues that it needs to deal with. I wouldn't say that this is not important, but that we're here debating this particular motion—it's a bit of a habit these days. We find ourselves coming to the House to debate motions that are basically motherhood and apple pie.

But what's really interesting about this motion is that where the government in fact could get unanimous support of all members of this House to call for a common securities regulator to be established here in Toronto—if the government were just to write the motion in that way and ask the House to vote on it, the government would get 107 members voting in agreement with that particular statement, because who is opposed to Ontario going the way of having a national regulator? I think there are some issues that need to be dealt with, and I'm sure there are people who would feel you need to have regard for some of the issues that the Ontario Securities Commission now can deal with that we might not be able to deal with as a national securities regulator. But who would argue with the federal government setting up this particular organization that's going to work at standardizing all the rules across the various regulators in this province, and establishing it in Toronto? Like I say, it's a bit of motherhood and apple pie.

The government has got to put a wedge in this thing, and this is what this debate is all about. They put a wedge in it and they say they want the opposition parties to vote in favour of the Open Ontario plan. That in itself makes it

the bitter pill that the opposition can't support, because the Open Ontario plan, I will argue, does very little to actually open Ontario. If anything, it allows and precipitates Ontario's decline. So, on that basis, I can't support the motion because I'm not in favour of the Open Ontario plan.

I do want to say that I understand there is a need to standardize some of the regulations that exist with the regulators provincially across this country. The federal government has been working towards this for some time. Ontario has been in support of this for some time. Mainly Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia have opposed this for some time.

The government, as a way of being able to entice the provinces into discussions about how we can talk about standardizing some of our regulatory rules around securities, the sale on the stock market etc., decided, "Well, we're not going to have an office. We're going to have a virtual office. It's going to be on a computer somewhere in the country, and we're going to do this virtually, across the country."

The federal government is playing it a little bit cute. They want to make sure that they keep Alberta at the table, they keep Quebec at the table and they keep British Columbia at the table, so they don't speak to the issue of where the office of this particular national regulatory standardization body, I guess you can call it, would be located.

They're trying to do two things in this wedge. They're putting in the Open Ontario plan so that they force the Conservatives to vote against their own federal party, which is trying to move toward some national standards on the regulatory commissions and the securities commissions; and also, New Democrats and Tories, trying to get us to support an Open Ontario plan.

I've got to say, that's rather unfortunate because, as I said right at the beginning, I think—I don't think; I'm pretty darned sure—if you did a vote in the House on the motion itself and took out "Open Ontario plan," members would vote in favour of that.

I want to say upfront that we, as New Democrats, will be supporting the motion that was tabled by the Conservative Party that takes the words "Open Ontario plan" out of the motion. In fact, I have a similar motion here that I was going to introduce myself, and I don't need to introduce it now. Quite frankly, it would be out of order, because the motion that has now been tabled takes the words "Open Ontario plan" away from the motion. Therefore, my motion would be out of order. I just want to say we are of the same mind, and I just wanted to put that on the record.

I want to deal with the securities commission in the first part of the debate. What are some of the issues that we need to deal with, and why do we need to standardize the regulations when it comes to these securities commissions across this country? I think the answer is a fairly simple one. If you're trying to attract capital, and that's what this is all about, in order to invest in Canada—hopefully, in Ontario, for us here in Ontario—

you need to have a securities commission that has regulations that are easy to understand on the part of those who want to invest; that provides for a fairly seamless process for how that investment is to take place, and at the same time, provide security and, I would say, a certain openness to the process so that people are protected when it comes to the practices that the investors make on the stock market. I think all of us can agree that we need to have standards that are national in scope, that allow to us deal with those issues. I don't think anybody's going to argue against that.

The other thing that we're trying to do—and this I think, as an issue, is an interesting one—is that one of the recommendations that came out of the committee that was dealing with this here at the Ontario Legislature was to separate the adjudicative and investigative functions of the Ontario Securities Commission. I think it's rather important for us to deal with that. That particular issue is important, because when you have both the adjudicative and the investigative divisions as sort of part of the same shop, I think that's to a degree putting the fox in charge of the henhouse. One of the recommendations that came out of the committee that my colleague Mr. Prue sat on dealt with that particular issue, but that's nowhere to be found inside this motion.

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There has been a certain amount of cherry-picking on the part of the McGuinty government in moving this motion forward. The committee has been dealing with this issue for a number of years now, at least two, three, four years; I forget exactly how long. They have been looking at the whole issue of how the Ontario Securities Commission functions and what we can do to make it function better; how we can ensure that investors are protected and have an ability to access capital in a much easier way. Unfortunately, none of the work the committee members have done for all these years on that particular issue is contained anywhere inside this motion, so I've got to ask myself why. If we're going to deal with a national standard when it comes to the regulatory functions of the Ontario Securities Commission, it seems to me that we should be putting forward some of the recommendations that were put forward by the committee that dealt with this very issue. So I would say it's a case of cherry-picking.

I think this particular motion—motherhood and apple pie, as I said initially—deals with only one part of the issue of how the stock market operates. It doesn't deal with the many other issues that I think people are interested in. So this is a bit of a motherhood-and-apple-pie political statement that the government is trying to make.

Most of us are invested in the market in one way or another when it comes to our pensions: either in defined pensions or, unfortunately for most of us, not in defined pensions but in contribution-type pensions such as an RRSP. A lot of people took a bath. When you look at what has happened the world over, the markets took a huge dip, 40% to 50%, a couple of years ago when we

had the meltdown of the stock market across the world. Ontario fared a bit better. We have to say that Canada and Ontario did better as far as protecting investors and their investments than other parts of the world, because we do have a fairly robust system of regulation and a very robust banking system. That allowed us to make sure that we didn't have the sub-prime mortgage rate thing going on in Canada to the same degree. That's not to say that we don't have sub-prime in Canada—of course we do—but not to the same degree as we saw in the United States.

The point I'm making here is that I think most of us who have seen the vagaries of the market, where all of a sudden your investments are over here and less than a month later they've dropped to 30% or 40% of their value, are looking to government—whoever that might be, federal or provincial—to deal with how you make sure that if people invest money they understand that, yes, when you go into the stock market there's a risk, but the risk is not compounded by people doing trickery in the market. I think that is a very fair thing for investors to ask.

I think of a friend of mine—and I won't say the name because I'm sure he wouldn't want me to use it, because it's not a good story. He retired at about age 60. He had been retired for probably around three or four years at the point of the meltdown. When he retired, he had close to half a million dollars in the market. So when he saw the market dip, he ended up losing \$200,000. Imagine you're sitting in retirement, you're not 65, you're living on CPP at age 60, which is not a lot of money—for him it was probably, if he's lucky, \$800 a month—and all he and his family have to survive on is the money that he has in his RRSPs. He had calculated that he and his wife were going to have so much income based on the amount of money they had in the RRSPs. Unfortunately, he was far more exposed to the equity markets than he needed to be. That has to be said. I think somebody who retires shouldn't be 100% in equity markets; you're looking for trouble. You should try to protect yourself and be in safer investments such as GICs and others. Have some in the equity market, but not all. Anyway, he lost over \$200,000, and this poor man was standing there saying, "What am I going to do now? I planned my retirement on the basis of how much money I had put away and now I've lost almost"—well, it was about 40% of his value. He was having to recalculate what he was able to survive on. So he was pretty upset.

Unfortunately, he decided to get out of the market on the low. I remember having these arguments with him, saying, "Listen, it's only paper. For God's sake, at this point in the game, don't get out. It's a little bit late to be thinking about getting out. In fact, you should be looking at putting more money in. You'll probably make money, because the market has never been so low." Unfortunately, he has compounded the situation by being out of the market as the market has gone from, what—about 7,800, I guess, at its low—7,600—somewhere around there on the TSX. I believe that now we're just

somewhere over 12,000, as I looked at it today. So he would have actually still lost a bit of money, but he'd be in pretty good shape today if he had stayed in. It's those vagaries that people worry about.

So why should somebody who has worked their entire life and done what they were supposed to do, worked hard every day, gone to work, saved their money, put it into RRSPs, managed their money well in order to have a little nest egg when they retire so that they can afford to retire early and enjoy the travel and the things that you want to do in retirement, be caught up in the vagaries of the market as we saw with the meltdown? I will predict that this will not be the only meltdown that we see in our lifetime. This is a cyclical thing. We see the market on a fairly regular basis going from a high to a low and skimming out the profits for the rich guys, and us little guys at the end get it in here, and then it starts to climb back up again.

We need to figure out—and I think that's the issue—how are we able to adjust the rules for the Ontario Securities Commission and other securities commissions across Canada about how they do their business so that, yes, we will be exposed to risk when we invest in companies, but we will not be exposed to fraud. That's, I think, a very fair question for people to ask.

We look at some of the examples that we saw in the news over the last couple of years where people were literally milking investors for millions of dollars on all kinds of Ponzi schemes and all kinds of hare-brained ideas that basically made the fund manager a whole bunch of money but made the investor pretty poor. So there is a need, I would argue, to try to modernize our regulations in order to deal with those particular examples of abuse on the part of fund managers and brokers so that we don't find ourselves in a situation of having to lose to those unscrupulous practices.

Is that contained in this motion? No. Why isn't it? It seems to me that that would be the number one issue that most Ontarians would ask their provincial government to look at: to make sure that, in fact, we don't get caught up in those types of schemes, where we end up losing a whole bunch of money.

I think of one particular—and I can't remember the name now. It was a person who sold investments, I believe out of Cochrane, if I remember correctly, who had been driving around the northern part of my riding—the southern part of my riding and the northern part of the riding of Mr. Ramsay. His specialty was managing investments for seniors. Seniors would write him cheques for \$20,000, \$30,000 or \$50,000 in order to invest, and he would say, "I'm going to guarantee your money. You're going to get so much money a month. It's guaranteed." When you're older and you've only got \$30,000, \$40,000 or \$50,000, and somebody comes knocking at the door and guarantees you that you're going to get a good return, some people fell for it. Unfortunately, it was a Ponzi scheme.

At the end of the day, it was a bit like a pyramid. He got to a point where he was not able to pay the monthly

annuities that he was supposed to be paying his investors, and the whole thing came crashing down. When the investors started calling, we found out that there were unscrupulous practices. I've got to tell you, the process that we went through, through the Ontario Securities Commission and others, in order to deal with how we make those investors whole were really, quite frankly, pretty scary. Imagine you're a 70-year-old retiree and, all of a sudden, you're having to deal with some of the regulations that we have here in Ontario about how safe is your money? Is any of it insured, as far as being able to recoup some of your losses? What is going to be done in order to charge this individual to make an example so that other people are discouraged from doing the same and taking advantage of seniors that were, quite frankly, fleeced of their money? A lot of those issues are not contained inside this motion and won't be dealt with in this motion, because they're issues that is more properly dealt with out of the recommendations that came out of the committee that looked at the whole issue of how the OSC functions.

So I say that the government could have brought forward a number of recommendations from the committee. I think that would have been an interesting debate, and it might have given us an opportunity to give some comfort to those people who are really worried about what the market means to them. I think if we've learned anything over the last couple of years, it is that people now, I think, better understand that although money in the stock market sometimes is attractive as far as returns, because at times you can make decent returns, it is really open to the vagaries of the marketplace and you could end up taking quite a loss. We need rules that deal with not so much the ability of the market to go up and down because of actual issues in the economy, but with the issue of people who are taken advantage of by all kinds of schemes, such as we have seen. So I'm a little bit sad—well, I'm not a little bit sad; I'm pretty disappointed—that those particular parts are not inside this motion.

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Those are my comments having to do with the Ontario Securities Commission and the common securities regulator part.

I want to talk a little bit now about the other part of the motion, which is the Open Ontario plan. Now, the government introduced in the throne speech this initiative that on the surface sounds pretty interesting. "Open Ontario": What does that mean? I suppose what the government means is open Ontario for business so that outside investors are able to come to Ontario, invest their money here, open businesses, create prosperity, and all of us have jobs and live happily ever after. But the Open Ontario plan means a whole bunch of different things to a whole bunch of people.

If you look at what the government talked about in the throne speech as it relates to the Open Ontario plan, it deals with everything from opportunities around water—we saw Mr. Caplan introduce a bill yesterday, I believe it

was, that revived his bill around water and the rules around what municipalities would have to do with water in their communities. It deals with the Ring of Fire, to open Ontario for business, which I'll talk about a little bit later. It deals with a financial services strategy and a whole bunch of other issues that are tied to it.

I just want to say that the experience I've seen in the resource industry is quite to the contrary of Ontario being open for business. Yesterday, we had miners here from across the province. The mining industry was here in force at what we call the annual Meet the Miners. If you look at Ontario today, as a result of how much money is invested through the market into the mining industry today, it is quite, quite different than what it was, I would argue, 15, 20 or 25 years ago. A larger and larger share of investment money that would go into exploration at the beginning of the mining stage, finding the mine, and later on for the development of the mine, more and more of that money is going to Quebec and going to other jurisdictions outside of Canada, and the reasons for that are many. The reasons for that, I would argue, are everything from what's happening in regard to the Mining Act—the government crows and says, “Oh, my God, we've done a great thing by way of the Mining Act.” I would argue that the amendments to the Mining Act, although well intentioned, didn't deal with some of the key issues that we had to deal with that I think would have provided more certainty for the mining sector to be able to invest through the stock market into Ontario.

You take a look at a lot of the regulations that have been put in place in some of the legislation that's been put forward by this government, which deal with a lot of uncertainty not only for the forest industry but for the mining industry, and specifically the Endangered Species Act.

I was on a panel with Mr. Ramsay and others where we talked about that at length on The Agenda with Steve Paikin in Timmins on Monday. What was very clear from everybody there was that northerners support the idea of protecting endangered species. That's motherhood and apple pie. But the regulatory process that the government has set up in that act very much adds a regulatory burden to what companies have to do in order to get access to the land, and, second, takes a lot of the land away from the ability for any development. So if you listen to Jamie Lim, for example, of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, or others in the mining sector, they're pretty hopping mad because they are saying in fact there is going to be less land available for forestry and less land available for mining than there is now as a result of the Endangered Species Act and the Far North planning act.

I would argue that we could virtually protect 99% of the land if we just had clear rules. The issue for me is not protecting 50% of the land as a goal; the issue should be how we instil rules and tell mining companies and forest companies what we want when it comes to protection, tell them what those goals are and let them achieve them without having the sort of regulatory approach that we

have in Ontario that is quite, quite bureaucratic when it comes to how it functions.

I will get an opportunity to speak to that in more detail in other debates, but my point is, there's far less money coming into Ontario when it comes to investment in the mining and forestry sector than we've seen in the past. In fact, there's a plant just here in Toronto—I can't remember which one it is—but it's a recycling plant that was looking at getting a large investment by their parent company that operates not only in Canada but the United States. They were lined up in order to do a large modernization within their plant. Unfortunately, that money went to New York state because the company decided it was easier to invest in the United States than it was to invest in Ontario, because of electricity prices and a whole raft of issues, including some of the regulatory issues around the securities commission.

I've got to say to the government: Open Ontario plan? First of all, I didn't know Ontario was closed for business. But slowly you're closing the door, I would argue, on a number of initiatives that you've put in place in order to deal with that. I say to you that if your goal is to open Ontario for business, I am prepared to support that at any cost, provided that we're able to actually see an increase in activity in Ontario. Unfortunately, what I see is a reduction.

I look at Xstrata in Timmins as a good example. There are only three copper-zinc refineries in Canada: one in Manitoba, one in Timmins and one in Quebec—their refinery in Montreal and their copper smelter up in Rouyn. The one in Flin Flon is shutting down this June. Xstrata has decided to shut down their refinery-smelter here in Timmins on May 14 of this year. All of that production supposedly will end up inside Quebec. So if we're saying that Ontario is open, as you call it—your Open Ontario plan—the only thing you've done is open the door and allowed Xstrata to leave. It seems to me that the government should have engaged in discussions with Xstrata to say, “All right. You have a problem? What is your problem?” I would imagine that Xstrata would have told the government what Xstrata has told to us and what Falconbridge has said to us many a time: “We have problems with the amount of money we're paying for electricity in Ontario. We are the largest consumers of electricity because of the nature of our business, and when we pay substantially more for hydro than you do in Quebec when you refine and smelt ore, it is hard for us to keep our doors open in Ontario.”

The new air emissions that the government has come forward with: They have put in place air emissions for which there is not even the technology to meet the standard. The science hasn't been developed. So Xstrata is standing there saying, “We're going to have to invest upwards of \$30 million to meet these emissions, and we don't even know if we're going to be able to meet the new standards because the technology to get there isn't quite achieved.”

That and a whole bunch of other things have precipitated Xstrata in their decision to close the metallurgical site in the city of Timmins. You're saying, “Open

Ontario plan"—it's some plan; what you've done is managed to open the door. Instead, what we've got is a Premier who said that he met with Xstrata a couple of weeks ago, and at the end of the meeting said, "If you want to leave, fine; the door is open, and have a great day." Basically, that was the extent of the meeting. It seems to me that the government of Ontario—Mr. McGuinty—should have been actively involved way before there was ever an announcement last fall in December about the closure, and should have been trying to deal with these issues to prevent it, and I think they are preventable.

I put forward the suggestion that that is one thing you can do, but we can also do what Newfoundland, what Nova Scotia, what New Brunswick, what Alberta, what Quebec and other jurisdictions do in Canada, and that is to have policies that encourage the transformation of natural resources and value-added products here in Ontario. For example, Newfoundland took the position when they built the Voisey's Bay mine that Inco was going to build the mine and they were going to have it concentrated, but they certainly weren't going to have a smelter and refinery. The government of Newfoundland said, "Whoa. These are our natural resources. You're not going to come in here and pilfer our natural resources and not add value to them, because then what's the net benefit for Labradorians and the people of Newfoundland?" So the government of Newfoundland passed legislation similar to what we have in our section 91 of the Mining Act, which permits the minister to say, "We'll allow ore exchanges to happen because those things have to happen for all kinds of reasons, but if you're going to build a mine, there is going to be a transformation of that ore to some process of value-added." In this particular case, a refinery and smelter were required to be built in Labrador if they were going to mine that ore body. Newfoundland: If it's good enough for them, why isn't it good enough for us?

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I think the reason is very simple. If you had that legislation in place, as I am proposing, which will come up for debate later in April, the government of Ontario would be forced—because the debate would change from Xstrata. Xstrata would say, "Oh, yeah? You want me to stay here? Deal with the hydro costs," and all of a sudden you'd have everybody lobbying the government to deal with the hydro costs.

So I think the government has a bit of an escape valve by saying, "We're not going to support amendments to section 91 of the Mining Act," because that way we don't have to do anything. Well, your energy policies are killing jobs in this province by the thousands. My good friend Mr. Brown, who, like me, is from northern Ontario, has seen many of the jobs in the natural resources industry close and disappear in his riding, as they have in mine, as they have in all the ridings of northern Ontario, and as they have in southern Ontario in places like Windsor, Essex, Oshawa and others. So I say to the government, we should be doing something to try to

alleviate the pressures that these businesses are feeling so they can keep their doors open.

It's interesting, though, because the government says, under the amendment to section 91, that if we were to adopt that, you wouldn't be able to do ore exchanges, that the legislation would prevent that from happening. I just want members to know that is not the case. Section 91 as written would be exactly the same in my private member's bill, should it pass. The only difference is, instead of saying "Canada," we say "Ontario" when it comes to the permissive role that we give the minister to ensure that in fact you're able to process those ores here in Ontario.

The Open Ontario policy? Listen: I want to say again that we are in favour, in the New Democratic Party, of developing policies that will assist industry to operate in the province of Ontario, to prosper and to provide the many needed jobs that we have in our communities. But I look at what the policies of this government have been up to now and I've got to say they have not been stellar. Has the government done everything wrong? Absolutely not. Governments of all stripes have done good things over the years, and this government has done some good things. But when it comes to the economy, from where I sit in northern Ontario, it is a real difficulty.

One of the issues that we're dealing with now—and this is going to become an issue that I think members are going to start clueing in to—is what's called the global adjustment on hydro. That is, the government, to pay for its green energy plan, is taking the entire cost of the contracts that they are signing with green energy producers, which are quite elevated—for example, if I'm signing a deal on a solar farm, you're signing deals at 60 cents per kilowatt hour, and you're locking people in; no matter what the need for Ontario hydro is going to be, we're going to have to pay for that capacity that is able to be generated out of that particular plant for a period of time. For example, if you get a FIT program and you're able to sign a contract with the government for 20 megawatts, let's say, the government is locked into paying for those 20 megawatts whether they are needed or not. The cost of that is put into what's called the global adjustment. As a result, we're seeing the price of electricity, even though the rates have gone down—the government says, "Oh, but the rates for electricity have gone down." Yes, but the global adjustment has doubled, so the net effect for the utiliser is that hydro is more expensive. So I say, Open Ontario—is that what it's called, the Open Ontario plan? A good part of your plan would be to deal with the global adjustment.

In the case of Tembec up in Kapuskasing, about a year ago—maybe a year and a half ago, but I would argue a year ago—the global adjustment was a net benefit to the company, because what it does is it allows them to manage their consumption so that they are not buying power in the peak, when electricity prices are higher, allowing Ontario Hydro to flatten the amount of electricity that's needed rather than having large peaks, as we have now. You've gone from a net benefit to a company like Tembec to where they're having to spend, in Kapusk-

kasing, an additional \$1.8 million a month on electricity just because of the global adjustment. Imagine if you're a paper mill and you are having to pay \$1.8 million in addition to what you were paying last year. It increases your production by almost \$100 a tonne. That's the difference between keeping your doors open or having to close them.

Now, in Kapuskasing, I've got to say the community, the workers and the management have come together. Huge efficiencies have been made in that plant. The workers have done tremendous work in order to find efficiencies with management. A contract was signed just recently this year where there was a 10% reduction overall in everybody's wages and benefits, management and union, for a period of a year to help them adjust to this global adjustment. But I've got to say, you can't keep on going this way, because at one point the piper is going to have to be paid, and the global adjustment is going to be a real problem for companies like Tembec.

I just want to say now that if you were to shut down a paper mill like Tembec—and, God, we don't want that to happen, and I'm sure the government doesn't either—it means to say that every sawmill on Highway 11, from Kirkland Lake all the way up to Timmins, is going to shut down, because there won't be anywhere to sell the chips.

I say to the government, there's a real cost to the Open Ontario plan that you're putting forward if you're not dealing with the global adjustment and not dealing with hydro rates for our large utility customers. They have to be able to operate at a profit. If they're losing money because of high electricity prices, they will close their doors and they will go away.

What's worse is, it makes it hard for Ontario companies to attract investment in order to modernize their facilities, because they're having to compete. Most of these companies now are no longer stand-alone Canadian companies; they're part of multinational companies, which are constantly competing for investment within their parent company for money for them to modernize. So it's going to become much more difficult as a result of what the government is doing, in not having a real Open Ontario plan to deal with some of these issues.

The other thing in regards to Open Ontario—I just want to speak about this in the few minutes that I've got left—is the Ring of Fire, because the Open Ontario plan, again, deals with the Ring of Fire.

I was actually quite shocked, because up until the throne speech, the government's plan for the development that is north of Highway 11, what we call north of the undertaking, is to have what's called the—what do they call it? Bill 191, the act that deals with protection of land in northern Ontario north of the undertaking—I can't remember the name of it. Isn't that something? Anyway, the point is, the idea within that act is to protect 50% of the land. Up till now, the government has said, "We want to protect 50% of the land mass that's north of the undertaking, in perpetuity. There will be no development there whatsoever." The process is, if the act is passed after third reading, you're going to have a 10-

year process to develop. What is that 50%? Where is it physically on a map? Where can you develop and where can you not have development?

All of a sudden, inside the throne speech, under this Open Ontario plan, the government announces that they're going to go full bore with the Ring of Fire. I'm sitting there, saying, "Well, that's great." I've got a mine up in Attawapiskat, which is up in that area. It's very beneficial to Ontario, it's very beneficial to my riding and the people of Attawapiskat and others. But how can you go from wanting to protect 50% of the land, to all of a sudden, "Let 'er rip and have development, no matter what"?

I think what's happening is that the government is starting to realize it's got a bit of a problem in northern Ontario. They've finally woken up and found out that there's a big problem in the economy of the north, that the natural resource sector is not being supported by good rules around investment, rules around hydro, environmental regulation, and things under the Endangered Species Act. The government is saying, "Well, we've got to announce something in the throne speech. What have you got, Mike?" "Oh, I've got the Ring of Fire." "Okay, put that in the throne speech." So all of a sudden, an announcement is made that we're going to have the Ring of Fire.

I just want to tell people that I think it's a great idea to develop the mine north of Marten Falls, which, again, is in my riding. Elijah Moonias and his community, along with the neighbouring communities that are in Howard Hampton's riding, are going to be very happy if a mine is developed there, because it will create employment and opportunity for them. So I think it's a great idea.

But if anybody thinks, because the Premier announced it under the Open Ontario plan, that we're going to have a Ring of Fire development in Ontario any time soon, I say give your head a shake. We are still far away from ever developing a mine there. The feasibility study still has to be finished; that's going to take some time. But more importantly, where are the rules when it comes to the negotiation with our First Nations?

Open Ontario means that if you're going to have development, First Nations are going to have to have some sort of comfort when it comes to what they're going to benefit from when these mines open in the Ring of Fire. What amount of jobs are we going to get for our First Nations friends living in the far north? What kind of training opportunities are we going to provide to First Nations who qualify for these jobs? What business opportunities will be available to First Nations businesses and communities to be able to start up businesses to benefit? What impact benefit agreements will be negotiated with those communities so that we can go forward? None of that is defined. There's nothing in the northern growth act, I think it's called, and there's certainly nothing in the Mining Act that deals with that. So the mining companies are going to have to go out on their own and negotiate their own training deals, their own IBAs. They're going to have to reinvent the wheel every time a new mine is being brought into production. I've

got to tell you, it's hugely expensive for the mining sector to do that on their own, and they're looking to this government to put in place some rules.

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I believe that all members of the Legislature—and this is a non-partisan comment—want to make sure that First Nations benefit from mining and forestry in their communities. I don't think there's a member here, Liberal, Conservative or New Democrat, who will disagree with that. But to agree with the concept without putting in place the rules about how this is going to happen is meaningless.

For example, the Ring of Fire, as announced in the throne speech, as part of the Open Ontario plan—An expectation has been created that we're going to have a mine there in a very short time and that it's going to employ 4,000 to 5,000 people, both at the mine and in the processing facilities connected with the mining. Well, I've got to tell you, that ain't going to happen. Some people are saying seven years, but I think seven years is really stretching it; I think it's more like 10. Because by the time you finish the feasibility study on what the mine will look like and how much it's going to cost for development etc., and raise the capital necessary—and that's part of the Ontario Securities Commission stuff as well—it's going to take a while. You're going to have to negotiate an impact benefit agreement with each First Nation. And let me tell you, First Nations want development, but First Nations are starting to learn more and more what development is all about.

De Beers negotiated the first—well, actually, the second—impact benefit agreement in the province of Ontario; Musselwhite and Goldcorp were the first ones to do so in northwestern Ontario. Those IBAs took the better part of five years to negotiate. I know; I was part of the negotiations. It took five years for Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Moose Factory and others to come to terms with De Beers Canada, to negotiate an IBA. Luckily, De Beers said at the very beginning, “We will not bring this mine into production until we have an IBA that has been ratified by the community.” So they gave the First Nations a certain comfort in knowing that the project wouldn't go ahead without their say-so. But it took five years to put that process together, to sign an IBA, and what we've learned through that process is that we need to have the government create rules about what we expect mining companies, forestry companies and others to do regarding making First Nations whole when it comes to the use of their traditional territory. We don't have that in the Open Ontario plan. In the Open Ontario plan, other than saying, “We want to see the Ring of Fire go forward,” the government has not dealt with the issue of how you put IBAs in place.

Another issue—and I think members have to get their heads around this—is the issue of capacity in our communities. I was in Constance Lake last Monday. Northland Power is looking at building seven dams on a river just south of Constance Lake. That particular company, Northland Power, is going to build fairly low-impact dams on that river—they're what they call “run of

the river”—but there are going to be about four or five years of construction to build those dams on the river. You're going to need machinists, millwrights, electricians, welders—all kinds of skilled trades. The community is negotiating an IBA with Northland Power, and part of the IBA is, “We need to have opportunities to access jobs on those construction sites.” I asked the community members who were there—and they were there in large numbers on Monday night of last week—“How many people here qualify for an apprenticeship?” Not a lot of hands went up, because most didn't have the math or the skills necessary on the education side to qualify for an apprenticeship. You can't get an apprenticeship without grade 12 now. So I'm going to be asking the government to engage in discussions between Northland Power and Constance Lake First Nation to develop pre-apprenticeship training in advance of the construction. We know that if this project goes ahead, by the time all of the regulatory stuff is done we should have enough time to put in place pre-apprenticeship training so that community members living in Constance Lake and others will have an opportunity to qualify for those apprenticeships, which will lead to permanent jobs in the construction of these particular dams. When the dams are constructed and the project is over, as far as the construction phase, you will have electricians, mechanics, machinists, welders and all kinds of skilled trades individuals who live in Constance Lake. They can then take those skills and transfer them to other industries in northern Ontario that are close to their community.

It's going to be the same thing with Detour Gold. Detour Gold, if people don't know, is building a 55,000-tonne-a-day gold mine at Detour Lake, where there used to be the Detour Lake gold mine. That's huge: 55,000 tonnes a day for 15 years—quite the project. Again, I've talked to Detour Gold. As a matter of fact, the CFO was here, Mr. Paul Martin—not the Liberal Paul Martin, former Prime Minister, but the CFO for Detour Gold. I've talked to Derek Teevan, and I've talked to Moose Cree First Nation and others, and I told them about the issue around trying to set something up in order to get the ministry involved with training, and they were just nodding their heads and saying, “Yeah, we have experience. We understand we're going to have an issue there. We want to hire as many local people as we can who come from New Post, who come from Moose Cree and other places, but we're going to need some help with pre-qualifying people for those jobs that are going to be at the mine.”

Again, a large construction phase—about 700 jobs while it's being constructed. It will be about two or two and a half years, and once into production, that mine should probably employ around 400 people. So it's a really good thing for the region.

But again, if you have an Open Ontario plan, the government, I think, needs to put into that plan something that deals with giving companies and communities an ability to deal with those issues that allow citizens to participate in that economic activity. We can't put it on

the back of the shareholders. We as a province have to recognize that we are in the training business, that the taxation system is there to socialize the cost of certain activities such as training, and that we should be using provincial dollars in order to train individuals so that they are able to participate in those activities that will come from the development of the Detour Lake gold mine, the Ring of Fire, or Northland Power, whoever it might be—or the OPG project in the Mattagami River basin, which is probably going to employ about 700 people during the construction phase. A number of dams are being refitted, doubling the production of those hydro facilities. What are we doing in order to make sure that people are able to qualify for those jobs from First Nations and others?

So if the government is serious about having an Open Ontario plan, as suggested in this motion, I think that we definitely have to think about the policies necessary to really say that Ontario is open for business. That is part of the problem, and one of the reasons I can't vote for this motion, because the Open Ontario plan, I would argue, doesn't put forward any of those concepts. We've got to hope that the government, with the budget coming tomorrow, has had a chance to think since the throne speech and put some of these items inside the budget. The test will be tomorrow—I guess about this time tomorrow; actually at 4 o'clock tomorrow—when the budget is done.

I also note that in the Open Ontario plan the government plans on increasing the number of seats available in our universities and colleges for expat students—students that come from away. I think that's a good idea. I think that's something that we should be working towards. But are we—and this will be the test, again, tomorrow. If we're saying that we're opening Ontario by allowing foreign students to come into our universities and colleges, which is desirable, what are we going to do to ensure that our colleges and universities have the financial capacity to deal with that increase? Because in some cases, you're going to need more spaces. There's going to have to be some money available for physical infrastructure, but also we're going to have to have money in order to increase staff. Not all of that is going to be paid by way of tuition. Yes, those students pay a larger tuition when they come from abroad to study at our universities and colleges—well, universities—but at the end, that is not enough money to pay for the type of expansion that the government is looking for inside the system. So Open Ontario will necessitate that in fact we're going to have to have some pretty serious investments in our post-secondary institutions in order to deal with that.

The other point I would like to make—I'm running out of time, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I could probably do it in two minutes. I'm a real trooper when it comes to that, aren't I?

The other thing—and I want to speak to it very quickly, because I noticed Mr. Caplan actually introduced his water bill again yesterday—is that the government, as part of the Open Ontario plan, seems to be indicating that it wants to deal with water efficiency standards and other issues that will affect municipalities. I just want to say that municipalities in my riding are probably no different than the municipalities in your riding. I got a whole whack of phone calls, emails and letters from municipal councils, by way of resolution, that are really concerned about what Mr. Caplan was bringing forward, they believe, on behalf of the government. Now, I told them that it's a private member's bill, that this is an individual member bringing forward a motion. But there's really a sense out there that Mr. Caplan—being a former, and fairly senior, cabinet minister—bringing forward such a bill is not doing so without the blessing of the government, and that it's some sort of a test to see to what degree the government can actually go this way.

We know that in the Open Ontario plan the government talked about the issue of water when it comes to being an opportunity for the province of Ontario. So I've just got to say that municipalities are pretty panicked about what that means to them, because we know what the effect has been over the last number of years: As the federal government has balanced its books on the backs of the province, the province has balanced its books on the backs of the municipalities. And they see this as more of the same, where the provincial government will put in place standards and regulations and legislation that will affect how they deal with water in their communities and that will escalate the cost to the point that they will not be able to afford to do what's called for in the legislation. So if you're saying Ontario's open, it seems to me it should be about you can make it affordable so people can actually invest here. I think that's the biggest problem that I see within this particular motion.

Seeing it being 6 of the clock, I will continue my debate tomorrow as we come back.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): In fact, it is 6 of the clock. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock, Thursday, March 25.

The House adjourned at 1800

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 25 March 2010

Jeudi 25 mars 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 25 March 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 25 mars 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010

SUR LES PROFESSIONS COMPTABLES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 24, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 158, An Act to repeal and replace the statutes governing The Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario, the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario and The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario / Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à abroger et à remplacer les lois régissant l'Association des comptables généraux accrédités de l'Ontario, les Comptables en management accrédités de l'Ontario et l'Institut des comptables agréés de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That is funny. Good morning, everyone. How are we doing? I thought I was continuing—sorry, Speaker—the debate on the motion from yesterday. Sorry about that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Bentley has moved second reading of Bill 158. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, say the New Democrats.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? So ordered.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 24, 2010, on the motion by Mr. Duncan to locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was just saying, good morning, everyone. I should have looked at my House sheet as I got up to speak, and realized that we were finishing up business from yesterday.

As I was saying yesterday on this particular motion, I think a couple of points need to be made. This is one of those motherhood-and-apple-pie kinds of statements for the larger part of it, which is: Should we move to one national regulator? I think there are a lot of arguments on all sides of the House that some of that is desirable. Should we locate here in Toronto this new sort of bureau, as we say in French, that was created by Mr. Flaherty, the Minister of Finance, who used to be the Minister of Finance in this Legislature? Well, if I was living in Toronto—a lot of people do, and they would say, "That's a great idea." I said yesterday that I believe that if there was a motion on just that issue, all the members of this House would vote in favour. It's kind of unfortunate that we are using a whole bunch of House time debating what is a motherhood-and-apple-pie thing.

But what this debate is all about is not whether we should have the national securities regulator coordinating office in Toronto; it's all about a wedge issue that the Liberals are trying to create with the Tories and with us, for two reasons; that is, they've also put inside the motion that all of the House supports the Open Ontario plan. As I was saying yesterday, there are a couple of problems with that.

First of all, I don't support the Open Ontario plan as presented by the government. I think that what this government has been doing for the last six or seven years has done a lot to close Ontario. For the alarm bell to ring all of a sudden in cabinet and in the Premier's office, waking them up to, "Oh my God, there's a problem in the economy of Ontario and we need to do something to attract investment in the province," seven years into the crisis—I think you guys have been sleeping at the switch for a little bit longer than you should have. So I say, better waking up late than never waking up at all.

Then you've got to look at the details of what Open Ontario is. Are we addressing the issues that are affecting people across this province, from north to south to east to west, when it comes to the local economies they work in? I say we are not. I look at the Open Ontario plan as it has been presented since the throne speech, and at what has ensued since the throne speech, and I ask myself, has the government of Ontario responded to the issues that are facing industry today in Ontario?

I will speak specifically to what's going on in my own backyard. Xstrata, a large multinational mining company

that operates the former Kidd Creek mine in Timmins, has a smelter and a refinery that operate with 700 direct employees and probably a couple of hundred contractors. We're talking about upwards of 3,000 direct and indirect jobs in the Timmins area—Timmins, Smooth Rock Falls, Iroquois Falls and everywhere else—plus a whole bunch of supplies and services which come out of places like Toronto and other cities that supply the Xstrata metallurgical site. The company decided that they're closing this down. They're going to take the concentrated ore that's processed in that facility and, rather than adding value to it by putting it through the smelter refinery in Ontario, they're going to close down that facility and transfer production into the province of Quebec.

So you say to yourself, "Open Ontario?" It seems that you open the door and let people out; you don't let people in. There are a couple of reasons why Xstrata has decided to leave Ontario, but one of the huge parts of it is the price of electricity. They are using anywhere from 120 to 140 megawatts of electricity to run that site. When you're buying that much electricity and you're the largest customer of the Ontario Hydro corporation, you'd think that if the doors are being closed and those 3,000 jobs are being lost and all the ensuing economic benefits from that plant will be gone forever, the government would say, "Oh God, is there something we can do to keep that operation here in Ontario?"

0910

Had the government decided to deal with electricity prices, I would argue that we would probably not be in the position of closing that plant. I think a whole bunch of other people—Mayor Tom Laughren, the members of CAW, the citizens of the city of Timmins, the business community and others—would say, "Yeah, if you were to deal with the electricity prices, that plant would not be shutting down."

Open Ontario, my eye. All you've done is opened the door and allowed them to leave. What's worse than the Xstrata issue is that when the Xstrata leaders, the president of the company, met with the Premier some two, three weeks ago, you'd think that the Premier would have said, "Listen, let's sit down and have a chat here about what we can do to keep the doors open in that plant and keep you operating here in Ontario."

What the Premier instead said was, "Well, listen. No, I guess there's not much I can do. Oh, my God, electricity prices are a big part of the problem. Ah, there's nothing we can do, and we'll let you guys close down." Some help; some Open Ontario. The only thing the Premier did was open the door and say, "Bye. Don't forget to turn off the lights when you leave Ontario." That has been the Open Ontario experience that I've seen so far.

I look at what is happening in the pulp and paper industry across the north and here in southern Ontario and places like Welland and Toronto where there are recycling plants. Electricity is a big part of the cost of their doing business. In fact, when it comes to operating a pulp or a craft mill, electricity prices will run you about 20% to 30% of your overall cost, depending on the plant and

the design, but on average, 20% to 30%. The rate of electricity has gone down, but what has happened is that the global adjustment has basically turned that rate decrease on its ear, so that people are now paying much more for electricity than they did before.

I'll just give you a little example—Tembec, Kapuskasing, that particular operation. About a year ago, when you looked at the global adjustment, the global adjustment was a net benefit to them, because what the global adjustment does—for people to understand—is that Ontario can generate up to about 26,000 megawatts of electricity, but on average, probably only needs about 18,000 or 20,000 megawatts of electricity to run as a baseload. But because there are peaks in the day where there is a lot of electricity being utilized, you have to have the capacity to generate those 26,000 megawatts of electricity at any time, in case there is a peak.

What the global adjustment was supposed to do and what the DR1s and DR2s and DR3s—these are programs that the government has—were to do, was to say to industries like the pulp and paper industry, mining and others, "If you do not purchase the electricity during the peak and you flatten out the demand so that you don't need to generate the 26,000 megawatts, but you can generate, on average, 18,000 megawatts, 24 hours a day—that would be the most that we would demand—that will save you money as a company, because we will not charge you excessive rates during the peaks, and we will offset the electricity that you don't use and give you"—as they did in the pulp and paper industry—"a credit saying that we'll count you like a generator. If you don't use 10,000 megawatts of electricity in these times, we'll say that that 10,000 megawatts"—excuse me, that 10 meg. I've got to get my thousands and my megs right, because there is a big difference there.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes, be careful.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: "That 10 meg will counted as a credit on your hydro bill; we will pay you as if you were a generator." The effect of that was to manage down the demand of electricity, and if you can manage down the demand of electricity, it means that you don't have to have the coal-fired plants, and you don't need to rely on a whole bunch of other mechanisms of generating electricity that, quite frankly, are bad for our environment. And if you're able to conserve on the other side, in the plant itself, there are also efficiencies there, not only when it comes to money, but when it comes to the environment.

So a year ago, the global adjustment was, in effect, a net positive gain to those particular companies. This year, in February, the company Tembec, Kapuskasing, paid \$1.8 million in additional hydro charges because of the global adjustment. The effect is that the way the global adjustment is now being calculated makes it a disincentive for companies to conserve, because where you are working towards conservation and bringing down your demand, you are being charged the global adjustment to bring the electricity price back up above what it would be prior to your starting to do your conservation.

My God, what are you guys thinking of? As I said, was there an alarm clock in the Premier's office, in the

cabinet room, that rang seven years later and he said, "Oh, we've got a problem. We're going to put Open Ontario in our throne speech and then put it in this motion"? Listen, these are real serious problems, and if you don't address those issues, such as the global adjustment in electricity, not only is that bad for the environment; it's bad for jobs. Timmins is seeing 3,000 direct and indirect jobs leave our area. Why? Because of the global adjustment. I would say it's 70% of the problem. There are other issues, but that's for another debate.

In the case of the pulp and paper industry, if this does not get adjusted, if the global adjustment is not fixed, there will be pulp and paper mills closing down within the year. The problem is, if you close down the pulp and paper mills in, let's say, Thunder Bay or Timmins or Fort Frances, it means that all of the sawmills that need those paper mills to sell their chips to—because when you cut a tree and make dimensional lumber such as two-by-sixes or two-by-fours, the residual waste is called chips. Those chips are then transported to a pulp and paper mill and converted to paper—a value-added process. They will not have a market, and all of those will shut down.

Here is the cumulative effect: The global adjustment will rise even more, because you're going to have to offset all of these contracts that we've signed on the green energy side and you're not going to have the customer base by which to pay for them. So you're going to be taking out the largest utility customers in the grid, and you're going to have fewer people standing, who are going to have to share a larger burden of the hydro bill and a larger burden of our green energy, and it's going to be a cumulative effect where plant after plant that needs electricity will find it increasingly more difficult to keep its doors open. Open Ontario? By all means. I, along with my colleague Mr. Tabuns and the rest of the NDP caucus, would love to see Ontario open for business, provided we do that in a sustainable way and we do that in a way that is socially responsible to our communities; no question. But what I see this government doing by way of what they've done up to now for keeping Ontario open for business is not real smart.

I'll say one other thing. I was really interested in the throne speech, because up to the throne speech, the government was saying that when it comes to the north and the undertaking on all of that land north of Highway 11, we were going to protect 50% of the territory in perpetuity. The government has been running on that for a long time now—about a year, a year and a half or two years. All of a sudden, because the government's alarm bell went off and they realized they have a jobs problem in northern Ontario, they said "Let 'er rip. Ring of Fire, we're a-comin'. We're going to bring these mines on to production and they're going to fulfill the job needs in northern Ontario." I thought to myself, there's nothing wrong with the Ring of Fire if it's developed in a sustainable way. Of course everybody's in favour. But where is the government coming from? One moment they're the conservationists; the next day they're the brownfield developers. It's like they've gone from one extreme to

the other in a period of 24 hours. So I say "open for business"? Come on, guys. You can't be open for business when you're sending out a whole whack of mixed messages to the business community here in Ontario and those that are looking at investing, with the kinds of moves that you've been doing for the past number of years.

For that reason, I would vote for the motion if it were not for the "open for business" statement inside that particular motion. I just say to the government, you'd better wake up and smell the coffee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'd like to speak to the government's original motion: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. I'd just like to remind the honourable member that we're debating the PC amendment to the government's original motion, so you may want to include that in your remarks, too.

Mr. Charles Sousa: In respect to the amendment, I would still like to say that the Open Ontario plan is in keeping with the financial services requirement to put this national regulator in Toronto. The Open Ontario plan talks about a five-year plan to create new opportunities for jobs and growth. It's exactly about jobs and the economy. It's responding to the recession by infrastructure and retraining. It's about building new opportunities for jobs and growth through tax reforms, through clean energy, through the Green Energy Act and the Water Opportunities Act to create a cluster of water businesses that will be the lead in the world.

0920

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Not to be obstructionist, but there is an amendment on the floor to the original government motion, and I believe he should be addressing the amendment which deletes "Open Ontario."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It is a valid point of order, but in looking back at the debate on this motion the other day, it seemed to be fairly wide-ranging.

The honourable member has the floor.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Speaker.

I indeed say that the Open Ontario plan is about the financial services industry. It's part of the Open Ontario plan, and it speaks to establishing Ontario as one of the primary financial services centres in North America.

It also talks about maintaining strong education. The five-year Open Ontario plan will build on a stronger economy by expanding opportunities in our schools, our colleges and universities and our trades. It's about full-day learning. It's about the 20,000 new students in colleges and universities this fall, and it's about developing

a plan to have 70% of our workforce in post-secondary education.

I reinforce the Open Ontario plan, because it is in keeping with what we are trying to do to promote stimulus in our economy and ensure that we have a strong Ontario in our future.

It's about improved health care as well. The Open Ontario plan will improve patient care through new legislation that will ensure that our health care professionals work together in the best interests of the patient. It also speaks about new accountability rules for health care managers. It has new legislation that will require better integration of our health care professionals and hospitals. It's about funding that will allow patients to reduce their wait times.

It's also about debt reduction. Today's budget will lay out a plan to eliminate the deficit gradually and responsibly. Moving forward, we'll have aspects of the Open Ontario plan that will have following budgets ingrained to ensure that we have new opportunities for jobs and growth. That means having a plan to eliminate the deficit gradually.

I reinforce the Open Ontario plan as part of this motion—I am going to speak about the national regulator in a moment. Here's what people are saying about the Open Ontario plan; I think it's worth repeating.

"At a time of severe economic upheaval and widespread personal hardship, one thing that can safely be said about Monday's throne speech is this: The provincial government gets it.... The throne speech sketches out a prudent plan for an increasingly knowledge-based economy for the province." That comes from a Toronto Star editorial on March 9.

"Clear signs that the government is thinking creatively about economic growth. When dollars are scarce and international competition is fierce, sometimes the best innovation is an innovation in thinking." That's from a Globe and Mail editorial on March 9.

"The Open Ontario plan acknowledges some of the work already under way, including tax reform and efforts to reduce red tape, both of which the chamber has been looking for for years." That comes from the CEO of the Belleville chamber of commerce.

"We're pleased to see that the throne speech maps out this direction—especially in financial services where we are already significant players—and in green technologies, new resource opportunities and attracting the best foreign students. These will also be important in offsetting losses sustained in other areas during the recession." This is from the president and CEO of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario.

The last quote: "Today's speech from the throne, with its focus on creating the right environment in Ontario for investment, job creation and skills development, sets the right tone as Ontario prepares for the end of the global recession." That's from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

Let me speak to the common securities regulator for Toronto. This motion endorses the need for a strong

national securities regulator, with its principal office located in Toronto, where it belongs. As my colleague the parliamentary assistant to finance said yesterday, "Ontario's financial services sector is ... a world leader and a critical part of this province's economy. The sector ... employed some 365,000 people in Ontario in 2009, an increase ... of 60,000 jobs since 2003. In addition, the sector supports an estimated 280,000 ancillary jobs in software design ... and similar fields...."

"Toronto is home to globally successful insurance companies" and "investment and pension funds.... Toronto is also home to five of the largest banks in North America by market capitalization and is the third-largest financial centre in North America, behind only New York and Chicago."

It is clear that regulation and enforcement will improve with a common regulator. Capital markets are no longer provincial in scope; they are national, international and global. The Ontario Securities Commission is one of 13 provincial and territorial securities regulators in Canada. Different laws and different jurisdictions are individually interpreted and separately enforced. Multiple regulators can lead to duplication and restrictions on information sharing. In fact, Canada is currently the only major industrialized country without a national regulator. Our fragmented regulator structure puts this province and our country at a competitive disadvantage when we try to attract international investment.

Our government has long supported a single securities regulator for Canada. It would reinforce Canada's otherwise strong international reputation for excellence in the regulation of our financial institutions. We know that a Canadian securities regulator with the right structure would offer many real benefits for our economy. It would reduce the cost and increase the efficiency of the capital markets regulation in Canada.

While there have always been good reasons for the creation of a national regulator—improved investor protection, greater efficiencies in the capital markets and reductions in the cost of raising capital—recent developments have made structural reform more crucial than ever. Since 2007, international financial developments have altered the financial landscape substantially. It is now clear that financial risks move easily and quickly from financial markets to capital markets, and back to financial markets. The international financial market turbulence seen over the past couple of years has highlighted the need for regulators, including securities regulators, to have a structure to deal quickly and effectively with these systemic risks. The structure in Canada seems well suited for this in all respects except securities regulation. Jurisdictions around the world are striving to reap the economic rewards of enhanced competitiveness. No matter how much Canada improves its competitive position, we will still be at a competitive disadvantage if other jurisdictions move further and faster. It seems clearly counterproductive to enter this competitive race with the inherent handicap of an inefficient regulatory structure.

The Canadian Bankers Association has commented, stating that we should all focus on creating a Canadian

advantage with our Canadian securities regime, not fueling an archaic system. Does it really make sense to put Canadian companies, particularly small and medium-sized companies, at a competitive disadvantage and expect them to waste millions of dollars every year to meet repetitive and overlapping regulatory requirements?

The International Monetary Fund has said that Canada would attract more investment with a common regulator and that would help to reduce compliance and administrative costs.

The CBA also commented on the passport model, simply saying that it is a second-best solution. The passport model doesn't go far enough. Sure, it's an effort by the regulators to address the current problems and inefficiencies of the status quo, but it entrenches all the infrastructure and costs of the current fragmented system. It creates an overlapping set of home and host jurisdictional rights and responsibilities that will result in a very complex and confusing investor protection system. The system will continue to suffer from slow policy development. The last thing that we need is our fast-changing financial markets to be curbed by results of our regulators, and we still won't have a national voice that can speak for Canada internationally and deal with the securities policy and enforcement effective here at home.

The formation of a Canadian securities regulator transition office is a good step forward, agreed to by many, and it indicates that the government's commitment to reforming the current inefficient financial system is there. The Canadian Bankers Association strongly supports the transition office's mandate to lead and manage the effective transition to a Canadian securities regulator. The key issue, however, is making sure we have an efficient securities regulator system that works for the benefit of investors, businesses raising capital and the strength of the economy as a whole.

We have a number of stakeholders in this situation: governments, small businesses, large businesses and investors. The CBA believes strongly in the need for a common securities regulator in Canada and has these quotes: "Entrepreneurs and businesses seeking capital to grow and create jobs" would benefit; "savers and investors seeking opportunities to build their financial future" would also benefit; "employees working for companies that depend on the capital markets for financing and growth" require a national regulator; and "policy-makers seeking an innovative and competitive economy" require a national regulator.

In Canada there are 13 sets of rules and regulations administered by 13 different regulators. There is nothing to gain and no good reason for Canada to maintain the status quo. An inefficient system that has a negative impact on the financial well-being of all Canadians is the issue at hand.

Canada is out of sync with other countries around the globe which are moving ahead in securities reform. The current system puts Canada out of step with the rest of the world, and I say that because The Economist highlighted the fragmented nature of the Canadian regulatory system, referring to it as "antiquated."

0930

Former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge has also weighed in on this debate, stating that international investors view the Canadian system of securities regulation as the "Wild West." He has said that efficiency dictates that Canada has a uniform system of securities legislation that applies to all.

Research with regard to SMEs has cited that the decentralized structure of securities regulations has a substantial negative impact on Canadian firms as they attempt to raise capital and that the burden falls disproportionately on small and medium-sized businesses. Research demonstrates there are clear scale economies in developing and filing securities offerings. Offering expenses decrease relative to the size of the offering as the offering size increases. A \$1-million offering incurs four times the costs relative to the amount of capital raised than does a \$10-million offering. If firms seek to raise capital in 13 jurisdictions rather than just one, it is estimated that regulation-related costs would double to 16% of capital in the case of a firm seeking to raise \$1 million, and to 4% of capital for a firm seeking to raise \$10 million.

In practice, these regulatory costs limit the number of jurisdictions in which firms seek to raise capital. Although some improvements have been made through the passport system over the last few years, the regulatory system still presents unnecessary costs and inefficiencies that are out of place in a modern economy.

Lastly, as regards some of the major banks in the country, the CBA has commented also on the passport model. They appreciate the efforts by the provincial governments and what we've done in terms of trying to establish the existing system to more streamline regulatory harmonization and mutual recognition. It is their belief that the passport model simply cannot deliver the efficient, effective and consistent regulatory system that Canadian investors, entrepreneurs and financial providers need and want.

Moreover, their concern is that the passport model will actually create a more complex and duplicative regulatory environment than currently exists. It creates an overlapping set of homes and host jurisdictions and things that I've spoken about, and the responsibilities are very complex and confusing for the investor. In all, the same infrastructure costs and fees of the current multiple regulatory systems remain in place under the passport model.

Stakeholders do not only include the big banks and mutual fund companies. They also include, on the most part, individual investors. Diane Urquhart is an expert in regulations; she's an independent financial analyst. She's also my constituent. We've met several times to discuss these issues. She spoke to the Standing Committee on Government Agencies on February 23, 2009, as part of the committee's review of the Ontario Securities Commission, with emphasis on public accountability and effectiveness. Recent American examples show the dangers of ineffective securities regulations and policies, as she cites.

On January 13, 2009, she sent me an email called "National Securities Commission Needs Public Accountability, and Securities Crime Policing Reform is Equally Urgent." She writes:

"The time is now or never to fix Canada's broken securities regulations and securities crime policing system.

"But we need to make sure that the reforms being done in this time of financial crisis are not superficial..."

Together with Gary Logan, a retired detective sergeant at the Toronto Police Services fraud squad, they write:

"We recommend the creation of a new Canadian securities crime panel with securities crime policing experts receiving and assessing securities crime complaints from the public and industry insiders. The police experts on this panel would interview the complainants, prepare the assessment files and allocate the investigations by pre-established jurisdiction protocols to the participating police forces. The participating police forces would be the RCMP, and the provincial, regional and municipal police forces.

"For criminal policing and criminal courts to be successful, there should be no direct connection between securities regulation enforcement by the new national securities commission and the new securities crime policing system. Securities regulation enforcement and securities crime policing must remain independent to satisfy the need for public confidence in the integrity of how their fraud complaints are received, investigated and prosecuted....

"We need"—they say—"to be vigilant on the proposed design of both the single national securities commission and the new securities crime policing structure to make sure that they both have a robust accountability to the public."

They end by saying this: "We truly hope that our federal MPs have the wisdom to ensure that the new national securities commission and a new securities crime policing system are structured to be fully accountable to the Canadian public for investor protection. As the current financial crisis has proven to us, not getting securities regulation and securities crime policing right costs us our pensions, our personal life savings and even our ability to create and preserve jobs."

To conclude, the best location: Toronto is the logical choice as home for a national regulator. Given the significant role Ontario's financial sector plays in Canada's capital markets, our government strongly believes that the principal office and centre of operations for the new regulator should be in Toronto.

Let me reinforce: All of our colleagues in this House have already stated that Toronto is the business and financial capital of Canada. It is the centre of the nationwide capital market and Canada's link to international capital markets that are becoming increasingly global in nature. Toronto is the securities industry capital of Canada, employing more people than in Canada's next five largest cities combined—and I believe that the parliamentary assistant for finance reinforced this. Between

Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa and Winnipeg combined, Toronto is still the largest.

This city is home to some of the largest participants in Canada's capital markets, including the TSX, the eighth-largest equity market in the world, based on market capitalization. The six alternative trading systems operating in Canada are all based in Toronto, and of course, Canada's five largest banks are based in Toronto. Two of the largest 10 global life insurers, plus three of the four largest Canadian property and casualty insurers; 58 pension fund managers, including the CPP Investment Board; and 119 security firms are in Toronto. It's the headquarters and home for the senior management of national associations such as the Investment Industry Association of Canada, the Investment Funds Institute of Canada, Advocis and the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. Toronto's chapter of the CFA Society is the second-largest chapter of this influential global organization. Toronto is the headquarters of two national self-regulatory organizations for the securities industry: the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada and the Mutual Funds Dealers Association of Canada.

Saying that, we should have the national regulator right here in Toronto.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to respond, but also to put a position forward. Yesterday, our finance critic, the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Mr. Miller, made a very important contribution to this government motion. More importantly, he made an important amendment, and I think that's really what's on the table here.

I think we all agree with the arguments being made with respect to the financial capital of Toronto, the service capital of Toronto. Also, the member from Thornhill, who's our critic on the economy side of business, made a very good remark, and I would recommend that people refer to those comments.

Mine are kind of tied to that because of our amendment, which, if you look at the overall resolution that was put forward by the government, "that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator"—and this is the wedge part—"and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government"—now they're going to blame the federal government—"to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs." I guess there's some substance in that, but the genesis of where all this comes from is really what's most important.

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If I look at the remarks made by our critic, Norm Miller, from Parry Sound-Muskoka, he was responding in a general sense to the state of the economy. But he recognized the motion by the government. It's kind of a waste of time, because we agree with the central theme. Why did they stick in the poison pill and waste the time

of this Legislature during a time of the economic conditions in Ontario—and even pre-budget deliberations that should be going on? In respect to making progress and contributing positively, Mr. Miller moved an amendment: “Getting back to the motion ... I would actually like to move an amendment to the motion. I move that the motion be amended by deleting the words ‘endorses the Open Ontario plan ... by calling’ and substituting the word ‘calls’ therefore.”

So he moved the amendment which moved out the portion to deal with this House endorsing the Open Ontario plan. Really, we fully agree with the rest of it. I think all parties—Mr. Bisson spoke this morning and yesterday as well, and agreed. The other side: Mr. Sousa is a qualified financial person with a successful history in banking, and I endorse pretty much everything he said.

I want to commend the Premier, which is quite unusual—not just for me, but for us to recognize that the real dilemma, the debate that we’re in is bigger than us. By that I mean there’s a committee that’s now struck, and this is called the TFSA, the Toronto Financial Services Alliance. It’s a forum. This forum was put forward in 2008. They had been working through 2009. Some of the leaders on this forum are quite distinguished, of no partisan affiliation, in our communities. I’m going to mention one of them: Don Drummond, who’s senior vice-president and chief economist for the TD Bank Financial Group, and one of the most respected economists when we look at budget day here in Ontario. Who do we look to when we want an objective, informed opinion? We look to Don Drummond. He’s on this committee.

This forum is led by the mayor of the city of Toronto, but its membership includes the president of RBC, Gordon Nixon; Gerald McCaughey, who’s with CIBC; James Leech from the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan—the who’s who list is here—the president of Mackenzie Financial, Charles Sims; Robin Spencer, who’s with Aviva Canada; and Richard Waugh, who’s with Scotiabank. These are all the shooters. They’re on this committee. Who else is on the committee? There’s the Honourable James Flaherty, the Minister of Finance for Canada; the Honourable Dalton McGuinty from the province of Ontario; Dwight Duncan, the finance minister—as he should be; David Miller, the Toronto guy; and Janet Ecker, the president of the Toronto Financial Services Alliance. I believe she was appointed by the Premier, or probably by the Premier and the Prime Minister, having been a former Minister of Finance—respectable.

So this is bigger than what’s going on here this morning.

There are a few things that have happened that verify that this is already happening. The futility of all of this is to say our small contribution—certainly the very few of us here this morning—doesn’t do justice to how important this really is. I’m going to bring it into a little larger model, here, of revealing how important this is. Let’s not trivialize it. This is a presentation by the

Toronto Financial Services Alliance: Ms. Ecker and Don Drummond, highly regarded amongst a group of leaders in this alliance, all of whom are esteemed.

I don’t want to diminish its importance by mentioning the politicians, more so the organizations that are represented. Mr. Sousa mentioned that the head offices for most of the big banks and securities regulators—the OSC—are right here in this city. It’s a couple of million people; we’re the largest city in Canada. No one is anti-Toronto. In fact, we’re pro-Toronto. A healthy Toronto is a healthy Ontario is a healthy Canada. Let’s get over it.

This is the truth. The real thing is here: Ontario is struggling; there is no question. We have a higher unemployment rate than Michigan.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: We do not.

Mr. John O’Toole: He should withdraw that remark. It’s true. We are in serious trouble.

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m trying to be polite. You’re trying me.

Here’s the deal, though: On January 29—

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: I won’t aggravate them anymore. At least they’re awake. This is important.

On January 29 this year, there was a presentation made by this august group to the federal pre-budget submission, which would include Mr. Flaherty and others—and all members, by the way, of all parties. Probably Jack Layton was there, if he was back from holidays.

My point being—I could digress—those leaders are hearing from the leaders of this province, not political. This submission here is—the references: The TSX is here; the OSC, the Ontario Securities Commission, is here. We’re the eighth-largest trading group in the world, basically. Let’s put this in a global context. See how much trouble is going on? Look at Greece and Portugal, Ireland, Iceland. This is not some trivial matter. This is huge.

Is there any lack of money? No. Money is moving rapidly and wealth is moving rapidly around the globe electronically. I have members of my family who are securities traders in London, England—my own family. They worked here at Cassels Brock in Toronto and were recruited there. They’re securities lawyers with master’s degrees and all this kind of stuff. They do all their trading from the Isle of Man, which is a financial capital in the world. It’s a tax haven, actually.

My point being, let’s not get bogged down in the politics of this and realize that there are huge capitals that are moving and running the world. We may not like that, but their specialty—the person I’m talking about; I won’t mention any more details—deals specifically in resource acquisition in Argentina, Chile, China, Africa, and they’re assembling capital to own those resources because there is a finite amount of resources in the world.

Pay attention. This is not trivial stuff. This presentation that was made was representative of this leadership group I’ve spoken of. In keeping with the theme, I would like to focus on their submission of some key aspects of

the Toronto Financial Services Alliance. They've been working not just in Ontario; they're working with the Boston Consulting Group, Partnership and Action, mobilization for what they call the global advantage, which is sort of what I've been talking about here in a broad way.

I'm not going to have time—I should have really had an hour. Can I seek unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, for more time?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member seeks unanimous consent for more time. Is it agreed? I heard a no.

The honourable member for Durham has the floor.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much. An hour; way to go. Excellent. That's terrific.

I'm going to get to the real essence here. I could share this with members of the Legislature, because they would all read it, I'm sure. On page 7 of this report, "Establishment of a Common Securities Regulator"—this is a presentation made months ago to the federal government, and here we are, talking—we're the junior hockey team here in this; the NHL is somewhere else.

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"The Canadian securities industry plays a vital role in the national economy by enabling businesses to access capital and ... providing investment opportunities for the Canadian public"—which includes pension funds.

By the way, all pension funds are in trouble. Why? You look at the market, because all pension funds are somewhere in the market. So pay attention. We've got the big debate going on about pensions, about how the CPP is in trouble, about how WSIB is in trouble, Nortel is in trouble. Hey, look, pay attention. This is moving faster than most people want to even think about.

Here's the critical thing: "Effective regulation of capital markets is crucial; lack of confidence in these markets can have economic repercussions" when particular participants withdraw from them. "Canada is the only major industrialized country without some form of a national securities regulator." This is critical. In Canada, each province regulates it. So if you want to file a prospectus in Canada, you've got to file 13 of them. The regulations are little minutiae details, and these are expansive documents with "this," "than," "may," "shall" "will"—all these legal words. These are keywords in law, and it takes thousands of hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars to file a prospectus. We're not even in the market. If we had one, we could have one set of rules: clear, transparent definitions of what constitutes a trust or what constitutes a leverage. So pay attention here; I'm going to go on. I really can't do all of this in this short period.

There are 13 different regulators, as I said. Canada's reputation for a strong regulatory structure for the financial sector is proven. Our banks are recognized worldwide.

We just appeared in Ireland. We just appeared at a big conference in Europe on this. It's called the Fintel. This is a group of financial securities people from around the

world. Now, who's participating? Who is our voice? Actually, it's Janet Ecker. In fact, Janet Ecker appeared in May 2009 at the Fintel commission. I have her remarks right here. In fact, I've spoken to Janet recently. She's a wonderful person, committed totally to this. She's appearing in Ireland, actually in Dublin. She says, "One of our major initiatives"—she's speaking to Dublin and to the world, the European common market—"at the Toronto Financial Services Alliance, in co-operation with the government of Ontario, the city of Toronto" and the federal government "and the education community in the region, is to develop a centre of excellence in financial services education."

She goes on to say that Toronto has become a magnet for financial services companies. "Financial services companies are the largest private sector employers and the biggest contributors to the local economy. Around them, a thriving information and communications technology industry has developed...." You see the layers in this clustering effect here? It goes down to software development, manufacturers, business professionals essential to the financial sector, as well as lawyers, accountants, business consultants and so on—the Boston group and others. "The centre will grow as long as it is fed and watered." This is what we're talking about. Let's get on with it.

We could call the vote now and I can assure you, anyone who is paying attention would vote yes. Why have you stuck in the poison pill of this Open Ontario? That's Mickey Mouse. I'm disappointed in the Premier by this sort of charade, destroying the importance of this debate. It undermines the integrity of the Premier. Why would he do that? To use the politics of this important debate to trivialize this discussion is insulting to all of us here.

I support Norm Miller's amendment to withdraw that Open Ontario, and let's get on with it. Let's show that Ontario has one vision, one plan for a prosperous Ontario. I don't sense that. I sense this petty politics: Who's winning and who's losing?

Here's a very important message for you. The Fintel group is meeting, and I have their invitation here. I wish I could go; I am Irish. I'd pay my own way, actually. The third annual Global Financial Services Centres Conference is being held in Dublin. It's April 27 and 28 at the Dublin Castle. The special speakers here—the list of speakers is quite remarkable, from all over the common market and other places.

Guess who one of the speakers is, right after Daniel Gallagher, co-director of the US Securities and Exchange Commission? The next speaker is Janet Ecker, former Minister of Finance for Ontario and head of the Toronto Financial Services Alliance. I have the summary, and it's quite amazing. It's a global network of financial centres. There's a session on the development of the European Union, the world's largest financial centre. The euro dropped about 8% yesterday. Watch the euro. It's in serious trouble—because they're going to have to bail out all these failing countries and failing economies that, for instance, Greece is going through right now.

I won't go on any more than that. But in my final summation remarks I will mention that I took the securities courses many years ago. I'm over 65, so I look at my children's future. My future—there's less of it than theirs. We, collectively, are looking to the young people and the uncertainty in the economy of Ontario now. We need steady hands at the helm. We need to support this movement.

I commend some of the work that's being done at all levels of government, including David Miller, who's probably going to be working on this. I think that when he leaves as mayor he has already been hired. I think it's a done deal, but I'm on my own talking about that.

In the context of today, being budget day in Ontario—and here is the important thing: Let's not trivialize the debate on the deficit. If you recall, in the 2003 election, they hemmed and hawed and screamed that there was a deficit of \$5 billion.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Whatever it was. They took three years to fix it. All of a sudden, from November until March they've paid off \$3 billion—almost \$4 billion against what their revenue and deficit was in November to today's statement; \$3.4 billion that they've saved on the budget. They wanted to blame Harris and Eves for three years, the first term, and say, "Look at the problem they left us." That's abusive politics. It's misleading, in my opinion, and I think this is why we're dysfunctional in this Legislature in terms of serving the people of Ontario. I get so frustrated. I've been here for about 15 years. I chaired seven municipal budgets and I've run my own family, to some degree, successfully. I only say to you this—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Take a look and you'll see what I'm talking about.

The only thing I can say to you is: Let's not trivialize this. Let's vote for the amendment and let's vote for the resolution, and we'll have finally found a compromise that serves the people of Ontario.

I see that one of my favourite people on the other side has just shown up, and I have to give him credit. Mr. Phillips, the member from Agincourt, is a great guy here. I served a little while when we were on the government side and he was the critic for finance. I have a lot of respect for his contribution as well to the province.

But this is important. I think we should vote on it this morning, and in fact, send a signal to the Premier that he has our—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise today to discuss this resolution. First of all, I want to say that a resolution to call for a national regulator and to have that national regulator located here in Toronto is a useful resolution. It's unfortunate that the government did, as Mr. O'Toole said, put a poison pill in there asking for endorsement of its Open Ontario plan, something that I can't do.

The Conservative caucus has put forward a resolution essentially saying, "Yes, we need a national regulator, and yes, we need it located here in Toronto." That amendment makes sense to us. It expresses the interests and the needs of the people here in this province, and I think the people should be supporting that amendment. I would call on the government to support that amendment so there can be unanimity in the House.

I think that we need to understand, as we discuss this matter, that we are talking about very big issues and we are talking about a need for regulation that goes far beyond anything that's proposed in this resolution today. Unfortunately, as much as having a national regulator would be useful, it would not be adequate to deal with the problems that we faced in the financial sector in the last few—frankly, over the last few decades, but certainly not in the last few years. If we want to deal with those fundamental problems, we have to have a very different perspective on why we have a fundamental problem; we have to have a very different perspective on how you get at it, so that the foundations of any regulatory regime are based on something solid, not simply based on wishful thinking, not simply based on some hope that having a national regulator will deal with instability and financial bubbles that eventually pop, leaving a lot of people in very difficult situations.

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I have to say that it's extraordinary to me that this government, which in its Open Ontario plan is looking at the privatization of some of the most substantial assets that the people of this province own—Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation, the LCBO, Ontario Lottery and Gaming—hired the company Goldman Sachs as their advisor. That's extraordinary to me. If you're talking about the need for financial regulation, stable capital markets and a level of confidence in the financial system in this province and you hire a company like Goldman Sachs, you have undermined your credibility.

My colleague from Durham talked about the difficulties that the European Union is facing, in particular, the need to deal with countries like Greece that have problems with their debt. If one looks at the history, if one looks at what Goldman Sachs did with Greece at the beginning of this decade—they went to that country; made them a loan through a currency exchange, masking the reality of that exchange; took in exchange the revenue from the state lottery and from their airports, in the end putting Greece in a situation where they got quick cash in exchange for a long-term loss of revenue to their public treasury; and at the same time, although it was within the letter of the law, did not disclose the real state of their national budget to the European Union regulators—that's the kind of company that was hired to advise the province of Ontario on dealing with some of its most critical assets: revenue-generating assets, assets strategically important to the development of the economy of this province. That's who was hired. How can you hire that company and say at the same time that you want strong regulation of the financial sector and credibility on financial matters?

The reality of Goldman Sachs is that if we look at the crisis that happened a few years ago, the crisis of investment decisions around financial instruments that most people don't know about or are not familiar with coming home to roost—asset-backed commercial paper, credit default swaps, collateralized debt obligations; financial instruments, tools that the bulk of the population has nothing to do with—it's an alphabet soup for us—the simple reality is that this firm that's been hired to do one of the most substantial restructurings of Ontario's economy seen in many decades was up to its armpits in the market of selling these asset-backed commercial papers that were based on sub-prime mortgages, and at the same time, they sold insurance on those documents and on those instruments. Essentially, they sold a house to someone and they sold fire insurance on that house to someone else. The person who bought the fire insurance made money if the house burned down. And when the head of Goldman Sachs went to speak to the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission in the United States, he was asked by the chairman of that commission, "How could you in good conscience sell these products, and at the same time, sell the insurance that you knew had a very good chance of being collected because those products were going to blow up? Was that improper?" In fact, the head of Goldman Sachs replied, "Yes, it could be seen as improper." Later that day, his company offered a clarification through a news release.

If, in fact, you're talking about dealing with the climate of confidence in Ontario's economy, in its securities markets, in its management of its finances, why would you hire a company that was and is at the heart of the financial crisis in Europe and in the United States, a financial crisis that has circled the world?

Why do we have unstable financial markets? Why do companies invest in these projects that are a bubble, that are illusory? A big part of that, the reality in the United States, is that with rising income inequality and with stagnation of incomes, if people are going to buy goods, buy homes and satisfy their needs, they have to borrow. The more difficult the terms you set for borrowing, the more difficult it is for them to access that money. However, if you make the loans very generous, then you can have a very large market for them. You inflate demand. You give people access to cash so they can buy goods and you pump up the economy. Eventually, though—because there isn't a foundation there—you get a bubble that bursts. That's what happened in the United States.

If we want stable capital markets here in Canada, here in Ontario, having a national regulator without addressing the underlying economic problems that we face of growing inequality, stagnation of the income of the middle class and a decline in the number of people in the middle class, then we are constantly going to be forced to deal with financing companies that, in order to make a dollar, are going to do what some people call aggressive lending—risky lending, risky investment, risky bets in the financial market that allow them to show a good rate of return. But that rate of return is based on a foundation of sand.

If we're going to be talking about confidence and regulation, we need a more profound examination of the problems that we face financially and economically in this society, in this province. A national regulator is a useful thing. Locating it in Toronto is a logical thing. This is the home for the financial sector in Canada, the core of it. But it is not adequate to protect this society, this city and this industry from volatility and from crashes.

The United States has a national regulator. Because it has a national regulator, one can say, "Did it protect its financial sector? Did it protect its investors, its pension plans better than they were protected here in Canada?" I think you have to admit that they, in fact, did not. We had the financial sector centred on Wall Street, with outposts in Atlanta, Los Angeles and all over, go over a cliff a few years ago. If you get the opportunity—and every legislator in this House has the opportunity to go to the legislative library and borrow it. The book *Too Big to Fail* is an extraordinarily illuminating picture of what happened in the United States financial system in the years 2005 to 2008. The reality is that the regulators only really showed up when companies were failing. The regulators weren't moving forward to put in place a system that guarded the life savings of people who put their money in the stock market. They didn't guard those pension funds that depended on those investment houses. No, they stepped in—and they had to step in—at the point at which the system was so badly in crisis that banks wouldn't loan to one another for fear of being burned.

1010

Having a national regulator I think is a useful thing, but don't expect, don't dream, don't daydream that simply having a national regulator will protect us and our savings and our pensions from the sort of madness that went on at some of the highest levels of financial thinking that exist on this planet.

If you have an opportunity to read the book, a firm called Lehman Brothers is very much at the centre of it. There is a company called Bear Stearns that was in deep trouble; they were merged with another company. Lehman Brothers didn't get merged with anyone and came unglued far too quickly. In the course of becoming unglued, as their stock price dropped day after day, as their capital situation—as their ability to pay their debts declined and declined, they were in a situation where they couldn't honour the bets they had placed in the market because, Speaker, as you well know, many people who make these investments put in a dollar of their own money and borrow another \$29. If the bet they make goes sour, they don't just lose their dollar, they owe someone else the \$29 they'd borrowed. So these companies faced a huge cash flow crisis. Where was the regulator, saying, "You can't bet hundreds of billions of dollars on useless securities using other people's money." The regulator was nowhere until this was going over a cliff.

Again, a national regulator is useful. We should have one in Canada, but that is not going to be adequate to deal with the risk that is posed to us and our pensions and

whatever income we get from deposits we make, the investments we make in this society.

Even more instructive than *Too Big to Fail*, for those who ever watch the American show *60 Minutes*, is a book that came out, the *Big Short*, by an American author called Michael Lewis. The *Big Short* is an analysis of who made money off the collapse of the financial system. There were a number of people a decade ago who started noticing that in the United States, loans were being made to people who couldn't pay back those loans—loans on their mortgages—and not just to buy homes, but the second mortgage so they could go out and buy a flat-screen TV or a car.

Very few people examined these mortgages. The people who made money off that crisis actually went to the bonds and went through the individual loans, and some of the things they found were that there were an awful lot of mobile homes that were financed through these bonds that were sold on Wall Street. Not only were they mobile homes but, in many cases—and I forget the exact term, but it was really a copywriter's dream—it was a loan which people didn't have to pay back at any particular time. They could choose to pay it back when they wanted, and their unpaid interest and capital was rolled into the loan.

Those bonds were out there on the market in the billions, tens of billions, hundreds of billions. Big companies like Goldman Sachs would sell those bonds—that people who actually delved into them and looked deep to the base of the hundreds or thousands of loans that composed these pieces of commercial paper found that these loans individually were unsustainable, had very high default rates, were made to people who had terrible credit histories and, in the end, were not credible instruments, were not credible investments, and yet were being sold in huge quantities not just in the United States but around the world.

What was interesting was, one of the things that the financiers had learned was that if they made a loan and they had to collect, that was a very tough situation. If they made a loan and sold it to someone else who had to collect, they could make a lot of money fast.

If we want to deal with the state of securities and investment in Canada, let's have a national regulator, but let's have a far more profound debate about risk, its regulation, and protection of our pensions and our investments. That's the debate that has to happen.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being just about 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Shurman: I am very pleased to introduce the family of page Sabrina Sukhdeo from my great riding of Thornhill: In the west members' gallery here in the

Legislature today are her father, Roy; her mother, Nadia; her sister Sharon, and her brother Richard. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to introduce, in the members' gallery, Rabbi Shimon Dadon of Israel and Rabbi Yurmi Cohen of my riding of York Centre. Welcome.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to introduce Giulia and Stephan Marceau on behalf of my colleague the member from Vaughan. They are the parents of page Catia, and they're in the east gallery.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: It's my pleasure to introduce Bette Jean Crews, who is the head of the OFA. Welcome, Bette Jean.

We also have Kevin Eccles and his fine wife. He's the former warden of Grey county and the mayor of West Grey. Welcome to both of you.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I don't see him here at the moment, but—yesterday we had the mother of page Diana Dubrovsky, and today we're going to have her father, Vladimir Dubrovsky. I'd like to welcome him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook and page Neale Taylor, to welcome his mother, Nancy Taylor, and his father, John Taylor, to the west members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Acting Premier. The leader of the Ontario PC Party set out 10 ideas for 2010 that, if implemented now, will get Ontario's economy back on track. However, Premier McGuinty is ignoring our concrete ideas so that he can keep throwing money at priorities no one else shares. What motivated him to choose spending \$25 million on sweetheart bonuses to HST tax collectors over the emergency rooms that you closed in Port Colborne and Fort Erie?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The Premier did address this yesterday, but I'm very happy to restate the facts of this.

There is a collective agreement in place for the employees of the province of Ontario. What was achieved in the last collective agreement was that for any new hires, this type of severance issue would not be the case.

However, we have been bound as a government by components of agreements that were forged by the previous government, the Tories. They put this clause in the collective agreement. We respect collective agreements on this side of the House. I would ask the honourable member if that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: There are other choices this government could have made on that issue, and this question is really about priorities. If Premier McGuinty used the HST tax collector bonus money to reverse his cuts to the emergency rooms in Port Colborne and Fort Erie, he would still have \$10 million left over. But the Premier's priorities are mixed up. Why else would he have handed \$25 million in so-called severance to the HST tax collectors, who won't miss a day's work, instead of saving the 190 nursing jobs he cut in Ottawa?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The question here is, why did you put this clause in the collective agreement when you were in government? There were two occasions when they could have removed it, as government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Please continue.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think that it might also be important to remind the honourable members, when they were—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Let me remind the honourable members, when they were in government, they provided severances in the very same circumstances. I will remind them that in 1996, when jobs were transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to the University of Guelph—these people did have jobs to go to—they paid severances because it was part of the collective agreement. We support collective agreements. They have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The fact of the matter is, this government had at least five different opportunities to change that and chose not to, and we'll be happy to clarify that in further detail. But what this is about is priorities and what this government chooses to spend money on. The Premier wasted \$1 billion on untendered eHealth contracts, but whenever we start talking about what the real priorities are for funding for Ontario patients, the Premier taps out. That's what he does.

What motivated his decision to cut 15 acute care beds at Brockville hospital when the money that he's paying over to the HST tax collectors would pay for those beds 10 times over?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Let me remind the honourable member that when they were in government they had two occasions when they could have changed the collective agreement. They chose not to. However, again, in 1997, when jobs were transferred from the Ministry of Health to the Centre for Addiction—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, then. Members should be in their seats.

Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I know they do not like to hear their history on this. They think that if they shout loud enough, the people of Ontario will not remember the fact that they did the very same thing. They negotiated it into the collective agreement.

What I can say to the people of Ontario is that since we've come to government, we have changed that, and for any new hires, this type of provision would not prevail. So I say to the honourable members that they should look at their own record, look at what they did on three occasions in the very same circumstances when they were in government. We have changed that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Acting Premier. Premier McGuinty says the collective agreement with HST tax collectors left him no choice but to hand them severances, even though they are not losing their jobs or missing a day of work. But after six years of broken promises, Ontario families won't take the Premier's word any more. The McGuinty Liberals negotiated two collective agreements with the HST tax collectors in the past six years. So the question is a very simple one: How many more contracts will it take before accountability shifts from John Robarts to Dalton McGuinty?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I would again remind the honourable members on the other side of the House, who object to this clause in the collective agreement—why did you negotiate it into the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Continue.

1040

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford, I just sat down and you just opened up.

Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Speaker, I think they think that if they yell loud enough, the people of Ontario won't hear the facts. And the fact is that when they were in government, they were the ones who introduced this clause into the collective agreement. The fact is, they did nothing. Tim Hudak sat in two cabinets when this clause was in a collective agreement and chose to do nothing. The fact is that when we came to government, we did change it, and new hires are no longer entitled to this. So it strikes me as very strange that today they're talking about why this is not good—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Acting Premier wants to talk about facts? Well, here is a fact: Leona Dombrowsky, Dalton McGuinty and Dwight Duncan sat in a cabinet where—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member that she should be using ministerial or riding names.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister already used Tim Hudak's.

They sat in a cabinet where they signed off on five separate agreements that could have avoided the HST tax collectors getting a so-called severance without losing their jobs. He renegotiated the collective agreement with the HST tax collectors twice. He also negotiated the CITCA agreement, which was the foundation of the HST, as well as enacting the HST legislation itself. And in March, the McGuinty Liberals finalized the human resources agreement that transfers HST tax collectors to the federal government. So the question is, did the late John Robarts, our Premier from 40 years ago, influence Dalton McGuinty on that, too?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: This government respects collective agreements. The members of the Conservative Party are objecting to a clause that they authored themselves. They failed to remove it on two occasions. When we came to government, we did change that for new hires. We are a government that does respect collective agreements.

Actually, I have an interesting quote here that I would like to share with the members on the other side of the House: "There are a lot of people breathing a sigh of relief today.... This particular announcement just gives some certainty to the individuals who worked with the provincial sales tax and now realize they have an opportunity to keep on working." That came from the member from Oshawa, Jerry Ouellette.

The member from Oshawa obviously understands that workers there worked very hard to achieve a collective—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That's why the best quote of the year has gone to the Liberals for saying that caucus morale is lower than a garter snake on a backcountry road.

Ontario families know who is accountable for the sweetheart bonuses Dalton McGuinty is handing to tax collectors. But even though he sat on his hands for six years while he negotiated five contracts, you can still do something to stand up for Ontario's families: You can clarify who gets severance and when they get it without touching the collective agreement whatsoever.

Will you amend the HST legislation and return the \$25 million in bonuses that HST tax collectors in Ontario are getting?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I would say that what would meet their standard for respecting a collective agreement on that side of the House does not meet our standard. We respect collective agreements. When we are asked what we will do, we have acted. We have changed that part of the collective agreement for new hires.

I guess the question for me is: They appear to object to it so vehemently today, so why did they put it in the collective agreement? Why did the leader of the official opposition, on not one but two occasions, affirm that part of the collective agreement? And now, today, they come to the House and they claim that it is so offensive.

We respect collective agreements. We work with the people who provide—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Attorney General. In mid-December, the McGuinty government announced that it was paying \$5 million to the mining company Platinex Inc. to settle litigation. Platinex had sued Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation for \$10 billion and had initiated legal processes that resulted in the jailing of Chief Donny Morris, members of the First Nation council and a number of elders from the First Nation.

My question is this: Since the McGuinty government is paying Platinex \$5 million to settle the litigation, will the government also pay the \$700,000 in legal costs incurred by KI First Nation in defending First Nation treaty and aboriginal rights against Platinex Inc.?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I want to start by saying that this government encourages much stronger relationships, not only with our First Nations—with aboriginal peoples—and the government but between businesses, communities, First Nations and aboriginal peoples.

We've turned the page on history. We're moving forward and strengthening relationships. Where there are, from time to time, lawsuits that have been commenced, whatever their origins, we always encourage the discussion and the resolution of those lawsuits. Whenever a lawsuit is concluded by means of an agreement, I am absolutely delighted that it has and am hopeful the parties can get on with their future productive dealings contributing to the society that is Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: This was a recent announcement by the McGuinty government. The chief of the First Nation, who is guilty only of standing up for that First Nation's treaty aboriginal and constitutional rights against a mining company that I think everyone would agree behaved like a bully and engaged in tactics of intimidation, is merely asking: If the McGuinty government has \$5 million for Platinex Inc., a company that showed no respect for First Nation rights, no respect for treaty rights, will the McGuinty government do the fair, reasonable and decent thing and also compensate the First Nation, a very poor First Nation, for the more than \$700,000 in legal costs they incurred in defending their constitutional rights?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I say, I'm very pleased with the resolution of the lawsuit. If there were other issues pertaining to any action settled or still ongoing, I think the member knows that I wouldn't engage in discussions in this forum on those matters. I think he would know, as a former Attorney General, that there are appropriate ways and means to have those discussions, not speaking specifically but speaking generally, and he would know that it would not be respectful of either the

process or the parties to engage in debate in here about those issues or discussion of those issues. It wouldn't give justice, no matter where the question came from.

So I say to my friend that in recognizing the importance of issues that he raises when he asks questions, I'm not going to engage in a discussion of their resolution here, whatever they happen to be, when they pertain to specific lawsuits.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm not seeking a discussion; I'm simply seeking a "yes" answer from a government that seems to have \$5 million-plus to give to a mining company that behaved like a bully and an intimidator but yet says to a poor First Nation that had to use money out of their housing budget, that had to use money out of their recreation budget, that had to use money out of their education budget to fight these legal battles—the government doesn't seem to want to talk to them.

You say and the Premier says that you want a new, positive relationship with First Nations. I simply say to you: If you could afford \$5 million-plus for Platinex, a company that behaved like a bully, can't you afford \$700,000 and do the right thing and pay the First Nation's legal costs—yes or no?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I've given my friend the answer on that issue, but do you know what? We had a throne speech that spoke about the promise of economic opportunities throughout the province of Ontario for all peoples and for aboriginal peoples. We had a throne speech that focused on the Ring of Fire and the enormously important economic opportunities surrounding that for the First Nations communities. I see a much brighter future, and I know, working with my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, we see a stronger north for all people in the north. We see stronger economic opportunities for our First Nations, and we're going to work as hard as we can, not on the past but on the brighter futures for all people, First Nations and aboriginals in the province of Ontario.

1050

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Health. In the past year, this minister and her predecessor both have stated that Toronto East General Hospital was a model of excellent care, unparalleled in this province. Its CEO was sent out to help other hospitals that found themselves in financial difficulty.

We now know that our hospital in my community is at risk. The hospital's physiotherapy clinic will close next week, and 118 nurses throughout the hospital have been given pink slips.

Why is this government forcing the closure of the physiotherapy clinic and giving 118 registered nurses pink slips at a hospital which, by your own admission, has given and continues to give unparalleled excellent care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to take this opportunity to agree with the member opposite: Toronto East General Hospital does do excellent work. The hospital's CEO, Rob Devitt, is a leader among leaders in our health care system. He, like those in all other hospitals, is working very hard to make sure we get the very best value for health care in this province. The era of year-over-year unsustainable, unaffordable rates of increase for hospitals—those days are over. We've built the foundation for health care in this province and now we must drive the very best value for the money we spend on health care. That's important for the patients because we need to continue to provide better health care for people in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: This is a hospital that gives absolutely excellent care. You stand in this place and you say that, and you say that Mr. Devitt is a great CEO. Nobody is disagreeing with that. My community does not disagree. But we have consulted with hospital staff and with members of the community who fear the worst—that the excellent care that Toronto East General Hospital provides to the community will be eroded and that the services that you are so proud of that are currently available in east Toronto and East York will be gone forever.

Why is this government shutting down essential community health care services at Toronto East General Hospital, which, by your own admission, provides the best?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a government that values improving health care for the people of Ontario. We've demonstrated tremendous progress. In fact, there's a new report out today from CIHI that puts Ontario at the top of all provinces when it comes to wait times.

We need to continue to improve health care for the people of this province, but that does mean making some of the difficult decisions. I would welcome the advice and support of all members of this Legislature on how we can create the kind of health care system that will be here not just for us, not just for our generation, but for our kids and for our grandkids.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The minister can speak her baffle-gab all she wants, but the community and its dedicated health care professionals know the truth. This government of Dalton McGuinty doesn't give a hoot about our local hospital or any of the local hospitals. We're being treated just as badly as you treat Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Burk's Falls and many other community hospitals.

This minister knows full well her government is forcing local hospitals like Toronto East General Hospital to make these drastic cuts because they won't increase funding by more than 1%. Will this government reverse its wrong-headed directive respecting our hospital and community and keep our health care professionals working in an excellent environment?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We all await this afternoon's budget with great anticipation, and that includes our hospitals across this province.

Let me tell you about what we have done at Toronto East General Hospital. You might consider ignoring them or whatever: a nearly \$33-million increase in base funding since we were elected—\$33 million. I think that's pretty good. Over \$14.4 million in total funding to reduce wait times: That's 18,550 more procedures than they would have had otherwise without that wait times strategy.

We're also investing in services outside hospitals, in the community. Our aging at home strategy is one that is receiving attention internationally, because we know that by investing outside of hospitals in the communities, we can provide better care, and it's better care for patients—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Education. The bill that would create all-day learning is still before this House, yet your throne speech said, "full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds" starting at schools across the province this September.

The McGuinty government is clearly disrespecting the role of this assembly to make laws, by presupposing the outcome of legislation. I ask you: What are you going to do to correct this?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I will say to the honourable member that in fact this government very much respects the process of this place. That is why when we bring legislation into this House, we have full debate and then it goes to committee, and that is in fact the case that we have with Bill 242. It is going to committee; we are hearing many delegations on this. I have publicly stated on more than one occasion that we are listening to the points that are being made. So when we talk about respecting the traditions in this place, the role of ourselves as legislators, and the people of Ontario, their opportunity to impact our legislation, our government has a very solid record in doing so.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Again to the minister: Not only is the McGuinty government presupposing the outcome of a bill that is under debate and discussion in its throne speech, the McGuinty government is also going further and advertising its full-day learning program. The Ministry of Education website is presenting full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds as a fait accompli. One full-page ad says, "Starting in September 2010, the government will begin to phase in full-day learning."

These ads disrespect the role of this Legislature and the people who elected us. I ask you again: What are you going to do to show respect and correct it?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Last fall, our Premier made it very clear that part of our government's plan, part of our plan for the future economy of Ontario, is to build a very best-trained, best-educated workforce. Our full-day learning does just that. By the way, we have allocated funding for this initiative. We are in a legis-

lative process where we are bringing forward how we intend to implement what we said we would do. We are also listening to our stakeholders and the people of Ontario, something that they, I might remind the honourable member, when they were in government, very seldom did. There was no opportunity for people to come to committee and have an impact on the legislation.

We have a very solid record. We listen to the people of Ontario. This is something that the people of Ontario want. We know that on the other side of the House they are not in favour of full-day learning—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Last week, the Sault Area Hospital had alternate-level-of-care patients occupying 44% of the hospital beds. The hospital was at 122% capacity. They had 319 patients admitted, but they only have 277 beds. Even the MPP from Sault Ste. Marie said, "It is completely unacceptable that the northeast region has the highest number of days that ALC patients wait for transfer to an alternate care setting in the province."

My question is simple: Can the minister explain why she is cutting 50% of the funding for the aging at home strategy for Algoma while the crisis is going on in this community?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I must confess I have no idea what the member opposite is referring to. What I can tell you, though, is that reducing the ALC pressures in our hospitals is a very high priority for us. In fact, the LHINs across this province are working; it's their top priority. How can they move people who are in hospitals but actually don't need to be in hospitals? Where else can they get the supports? Where can they be moved to? What are the community supports that would help move people from hospitals back home or into the community?

It's what we simply must do, and we're working very hard across the province to move to get people back home, to get people in the most appropriate places.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I think the crisis in Sault Ste. Marie is worth the minister looking into and finding out why 50% of the funding for aging at home is being taken away from the Algoma district. The alternate-level-of-care patients are presently at 121. The hospital is overwhelmed, but instead of ensuring that appropriate alternative care is in place, the government is actually cutting necessary programs.

To add insult to injury, the new and very well-publicized long-term-care facility will not add any beds to the system. The number of long-term-care beds will stay the same. This government is acting like there is no crisis in Sault Ste. Marie, like the minister doesn't know what is going on in Sault Ste. Marie.

What is the minister's plan to ensure that services that are desperately needed in Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma are put into place?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I must tell you that the member from Sault Ste. Marie has been very active helping me understand some of the challenges that are being faced in Sault Ste. Marie.

We are taking steps to support communities across this province. We're focusing on where the challenges are the greatest, and Sault Ste. Marie is one of those areas. In the Sault Area Hospital, we've increased their base funding by over \$20 million since we were elected in 2003. We've invested over \$52 million in the North East LHIN for the aging at home strategy.

This is the way of the future when it comes to health care: putting those investments in the community so we can get people back home, where they want to be, where they are the safest and where they are amongst their friends and family. That's our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, as you're aware, the QEW runs through the riding of Mississauga South. It's an important transportation artery for my constituents. The Ministry of Transportation has recently completed new off- and on-ramps at the QEW and Highway 10. These improvements to Mississauga's infrastructure are appreciated by resident families and, I'm sure, by all commuters.

Minister, the people of Mississauga South are eager to see the QEW's next construction project get under way: the rehabilitation of the Credit River bridge. Not only is the bridge ready for restoration, but the supplementary lanes it will include will ease traffic congestion.

Would the minister tell the people of Mississauga South when the rehabilitation of the bridge will occur and how they can provide their input into the project?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga South for his question. We know how important these projects are to families across the riding and across the province.

Since 2003, we've invested \$88.4 million in completed projects in the riding of Mississauga South. We know that the Credit River bridge is an important next step. That's why last fall we began a preliminary design and an environmental assessment to develop a strategy that will address the long-term needs of the Credit River bridge and the QEW from Mississauga Road to west of Hurontario Street. We'll be holding public consultations with the local community this summer to share information about the project as well as to get feedback from the neighbourhoods on this most important project, the Credit River bridge.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I know that many of my constituent neighbours look forward to being part of the public consultation process on this project.

Minister, our families in Mississauga rely not only on our network of roads to get where they need to go every day; they also rely heavily on our public transit system. Improvements to public transit help avoid gridlock and help reduce emissions. Whether commuting to downtown Toronto or vice versa to Mississauga for work or going to another part of Mississauga, public transit is a key form of transportation for many constituents.

I would like the minister to tell us just what investments have been made in public transit in Mississauga.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The story of public transit investment in the GTA today really is a good news story. For the Peel region alone, this means a \$352.6-million commitment since 2003.

We've delivered on our commitment to provide two cents per litre of the provincial gas tax to municipalities. Last year the city of Mississauga, under that plan, received almost \$16 million in gas tax money.

GO Transit travellers who ride the Lakeshore West line, which makes a stop at Clarkson and Port Credit, in the member's riding, can now ride 12-car trains. That means that 300 single-occupancy vehicles are off our roads because of the addition of those trains. That eases congestion and emissions.

In January, GO added new weekday and weekend bus trips between Milton and Union, which serve Mississauga en route and new bus trips on weekdays, weekends and holidays between—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Acting Premier. Over the last month, I have surveyed my constituents about the HST and asked them what message they have for Premier Dalton McGuinty. Clarence from Jackson's Point is 92 and writes that he cannot pay any more taxes than he does right now. James in Sutton says he is an old-age pensioner and just can't afford it. Eileen in Holland Landing asks why you give her cheques when you are taking money away from her; she wants you to remember that seniors are on a fixed income. How do you expect seniors like Clarence, James and Eileen to afford your new tax? They need every penny they have just to survive.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm sure the honourable member, when she meets with her constituents, reminds them that with the implementation of the HST, 93% of Ontarians are going to receive a tax cut. And that would apply particularly to those people who are on fixed incomes. I have to say that I know many people in my riding are very happy to understand. I'm even hearing back from people now who are doing their income taxes that they are receiving more than they did last year, and it is because of the tax cut.

I'm sure the honourable member would also remind her constituents that we are providing a \$260 sales tax rebate. For those who own property, I'm sure she's telling them that we are doubling the seniors—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Small business owners are scared of your new tax as well. One businessman in Innisfil wonders why, just when small business is starting to see the end of the slump, the government in its wisdom smacks them back down again. Steve, who is a small business owner in Queensville, does not agree that your tax increase will simplify his tax collection or that it's better for business. He says it will harm any economic recovery. What do you have to say to the small business owners in my riding struggling to survive the recession?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Again, I would indicate to the honourable member that I'm sure she would have taken the opportunity to remind the business owner in her riding that in fact we have cut business taxes. In addition to that, we have cut the tax that they have been paying. They will now be receiving—instead of a GST rebate, it will be an HST rebate.

What we do have here as well is that the Toronto Dominion Economics report says 80% of savings to businesses would be passed on to consumers, so that enables them to be more competitive. That means they will be able to hire more people. The HST initiative is about creating 600,000 jobs. Now, I know on the other side of the House that is not a priority. Their priority is just cutting taxes. We're about investing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. Hamilton has suffered huge manufacturing job losses since 2003. Now, we're losing another 550 jobs at Siemens going south to North Carolina, jobs that this government should have been able to keep here. To make matters worse, there's a serious disconnect in the information from the government and the city of Hamilton. The people who lost these jobs and the people of Hamilton want to know, will the McGuinty Liberals at least tell us the truth about the negotiations with and about Siemens?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: This important issue was raised in the Legislature yesterday. I believe the response was appropriate, and I restate it today, that we do not speak about details of very sensitive negotiations. Obviously the members who have been involved in this are disappointed. We appreciate that corporations have the right to make their decisions. But what we can say to the people of Hamilton is that our government is absolutely committed to doing what we can to support their city.

1110

With the occasion of the Pan Am Games in the province of Ontario, the city is going to enjoy over \$200

million in investment. So I'd say to the honourable member, just as my colleague the minister of small business does so very well—she is a great—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I can't believe this. City staff and the mayor's office have been very clear about this: They were not consulted, they were not informed. The local government was not invited to participate in the McGuinty Liberals' efforts to keep Siemens operating in Hamilton.

Why won't the Premier, the minister and this government come clean on the lost jobs in Hamilton at Siemens?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I can say to the honourable member that this government did work with the local municipality, obviously a very important partner.

I think the real issue here is that we take every opportunity to bring good news to municipalities across Ontario, including Hamilton. Hamilton is going to benefit greatly from the investments that will come from the Pan Am Games.

Interjection.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: When the honourable member speaks about what those investments might be—\$200 million. There's \$136 million in the new stadium that will host the athletes; \$52 million for the new Olympic-sized pool at McMaster University—I think that's a tremendous investment; \$1.7 million in improvements to track and field at McMaster University. These are examples where, because of initiatives of our government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Minister, since becoming a member of this Legislature last year, I've heard opposition party leaders and members ask many questions about the ailing forestry industry. The opposition says that the forest industry is failing, not just because of the challenging economic times, but because, they say, the McGuinty government has ignored it for too long.

Minister, the forest industry is very important, as it affects more than 260 communities throughout Ontario. Of these, 148 are categorized as either very highly or highly dependent on employment in the forest sector to survive. An additional 163 are identified as being moderately dependent. This clearly is a sector that affects millions of Ontarians and many communities across the province.

Minister, could you please tell the House how you plan to revitalize Ontario's forest sector?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question. I know it's an important part of the economy in your riding. And certainly, may I say, having been raised in Thunder Bay and having had the privilege of repre-

senting the Thunder Bay area for the last 15 years, I'm acutely aware of the vital role that forestry plays in northern Ontario and all across the province.

There's no denying that these challenging economic times have hurt the forest industry over the past number of years. Workers have been laid off, mills have closed and communities and families have suffered. But indeed, amidst that bad news, our ministry has been working extremely hard to restore the competitiveness of the forest sector and support the communities across Ontario.

There are two initiatives that our government has taken as we work to restore this sector: the provincial wood supply competitive process, a very important process that will bring jobs back; and the review of the tenure and pricing system. I look forward to speaking more about that in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Please, let me do the supplementary, Speaker. I want to help.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, leave the clock running. The member from Timmins-James Bay will please come to order. Only one of us should be standing at any one time, and when I'm standing, you shouldn't be.

Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Minister, thank you very much for reassuring the House of the McGuinty government's commitment to restoring the competitiveness of the forestry sector. Both of these initiatives, combined with our government's comprehensive tax reform package, which proposes tax relief for businesses, including those in the forest sector—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Timmins will please come to order. You will have your opportunity through the normal rotation to ask a question. Please let the honourable member ask his.

Mr. Rick Johnson: —as well as our government's Open Ontario plan, will create a climate where businesses will thrive and jobs will be created—I think the forest sector could have a brighter future.

Could the minister tell the House more about how the wood supply competitive process and review of tenure and pricing will help create a brighter future for the forest sector—and calm my friend's nerves?

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's an absolute shame that the members sitting opposite think this is something to laugh about. This is a very important issue.

The ultimate goal of the wood supply competitive process is to put our wood to work. Currently, a significant part of Ontario's wood supply is not being used. By launching the competition for about 11 million cubic metres of merchantable and unmerchantable wood, our government is going to be putting Ontario's wood back to work.

The review of tenure and pricing is equally important, as it is a critical step to putting the industry back on a solid economic footing. The review will enable the transformation of the forest sector, which will see prosperity through a new forest economy that is based on new products, new markets and new processes. These initiatives are viewed as bold steps, and I look forward to bringing them forward.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Acting Premier. On Monday night the council of the township of Clearview voted unanimously in favour of asking Premier McGuinty and his government to put a moratorium on new wind developments. Fifty other communities in Ontario have done the same, including Grey county, the city of Kawartha Lakes and in Prince Edward county in the Acting Premier's riding.

I ask the Acting Premier: Will the McGuinty government respect the decisions of these local councils?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Lanark, your own member asked a question. I trust you would all want to hear the response.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We recognize that whenever you're doing anything that's new, whenever you're on the cutting edge on any initiative, particularly in the energy sector, there is inevitably going to be some resistance. The fact of the matter is that we have to move forward in the green energy sector. We know that the opposition doesn't support that, but it does take a certain amount of intestinal fortitude to move forward on these issues. It does take courage. That's what the people—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It wasn't me this time, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It was just then.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, I'm not stopping the clock.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: When we came to office six years ago, we inherited an energy supply that was very reliant on dirty coal that was polluting our air and that was impacting our health, the health of our children and, in the future, the health of our grandchildren. Changing that—getting rid of coal—is not for the faint of heart—we recognize that. It takes courage. It takes political courage; it takes courage from the people of Ontario. The opposition lacked that. We don't. We're moving forward, because we have to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I say to the Acting Premier: You may not want to respond and be accountable to my constituents and to 50 other communities, but you should at least respond to the constituents in Prince Edward county in your own riding. I also say to the Acting Premier: This is exactly why we voted against your failed Green Energy Act. Ratepayers are concerned with the health effects of these wind turbines, and you're telling them, "Tough luck."

These communities have had enough of the Premier and his buddies in the political elite forcing their pet projects into the backyards of people in rural Ontario without any say from the local communities. In Clearview, people are sick and tired of the Premier, who lives in the tony neighbourhood of Rosedale, telling them how to run their rural community. So I ask the Acting Premier: What gives your government the right to ignore voters in rural and small-town Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me tell you that farmers across this province are extremely supportive of the Green Energy Act, and I'll tell you why: They're an important part of it. They know that our generation has to stand up to ensure that the health of our kids and grand-kids is looked after; to ensure that we're applying a reliable and safer form of energy for the sake of our energy supply and our kids. Our farmers are standing up to that call, and so are our retailers and our residents. This green energy movement is something that each and every Ontarian is part of and can take some pride in.

We are moving from coal. By 2014, we will be out of coal. We have the lowest level of coal output that we've had in this province in 45 years. The benefit of that is the pollution that doesn't go into our air and the lungs of our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

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PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. On March 22, the city of Toronto held a public forum on the benefits of diesel versus electric trains. Electric won. Yet again, there was another standing-room-only crowd pleading with this government to implement clean train technology. The Toronto medical officer of health stated that electric trains are desirable from a public health perspective and that no one should be asked to trade public health for public transit. Metrolinx's response is that it continues to study the electric option but it plans to move ahead with dirty diesel.

I know the minister was at the meeting, so my question is very simple. Why won't the minister demand that Metrolinx wait for its own study on electrification before moving ahead with diesel trains?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was at the meeting earlier this week, and it was very informative. I was very glad to hear from the community. Obviously, as the new

Minister of Transportation, it's important for me to hear and understand the concerns of the community.

But I have to say that everything Metrolinx is doing suggests to me that they understand that electrification is an absolutely important aspect of the future of transit in Ontario. All of the work that is being done is being done with a vision to the possibility of electrification in the future. So there is nothing that is being done now that would cut off that possibility.

What we need to have is the evidence. We need to look at the evidence and we need to make a decision based on the science, and that's what Metrolinx is doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: But that's exactly what the community is asking: that until the study is done, they shouldn't move ahead with dirty diesel. That is what the community is asking. What I'm asking of the minister is a commitment. The evidence is very clear. No studies actually need to be done; we know that electric is cleaner than diesel. Everybody knows that. The question really is one of political will and it's a question of the minister. So I ask again, will the minister commit to going clean and electric right now? Not then; right now.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The issue here is whether the work that is being done now could be compatible with electrification in the future. That's really the question. If we were doing something now in the building that's going on that would preclude electrification in the future, then the member's question would be relevant. However, it's not. The work that's being done now, the way the design is being done, the building that's being done, offers the opportunity for electrification in the future. There is nothing that is happening now that would preclude electrification.

So what we are going to do and what Metrolinx is doing—they're going to complete this study. We will receive the study in December 2010 and we will then know what the evidence is and will make our decisions using that as our guide.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a question for the Minister of Transportation on the subject of the airport link at Union Station. Madam Minister, the GO expansion in rail service between Union Station and the airport link will be going right through my riding and it will start in 2015. As we all know, the Minister of the Environment had put very strict—

Interjections.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Now, hold on a second. The Minister of the Environment put very strict limits on these trains. As we heard the Minister of Transportation say today, she's not against electrification. She hasn't said that. So let's get this straight. Neither the minister nor our government is against—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to acknowledge the work of both the member for Davenport and the member

for York South–Weston in working with the community and advocating.

We know that it's critically important to the GTA and to Toronto that we get people out of cars and into public transit, which is why we've made the biggest investment in public transit in a generation.

Electrification of both the Lakeshore and Georgetown line is proposed in the Metrolinx regional transit plan. That's why, as I've just said, Metrolinx is building all structures to accommodate electrification. Bridges and grade separations are being designed and constructed to meet the greater height requirements for electrification; track spacing is being designed to allow for the foundations and columns that will be required; signal systems are being upgraded to allow for an electrified train system. That work that is being done envisions the possibility of electrification.

Once we have the road map—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: It is true that all of us, or many of us here, attended that meeting at city council. And it was packed; it's true. One thing was clear, though: This was the first Minister of Transportation who attended a local meeting like this.

At the same time, my constituents want to be consulted on this issue, and I give all credit to the minister on this issue. The member from York South–Weston attended the meeting as well. One thing came across very clear, and that is, all of my constituents want to know: What's the time frame for electrification? That's really the issue. What is the time frame? I'm sure the minister will give us an answer to that question.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that we have to be careful—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that we have to be careful that we don't do the public a disservice by having a false debate here. I'm really pleased that Metrolinx is studying the electrification of the entire GO system. This study will be comprehensive in scope and it will involve extensive public consultation, which has already been done, and there will be more.

The electrification study has a very ambitious mandate. They're going to be looking at capacity and service impacts, including reliability of service; environmental and health impacts, which was stated at the meeting at city council; community and land use impacts; economic impacts; and system cost funding, financing and delivery. We're scheduled to receive the report by December 2010.

CREDIT COUNSELLING AGENCIES

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Minister, with your record Ontario deficit, the entire McGuinty government should sign up for credit counselling. My question today is about credit counselling, the services in Durham region, as well as

accredited counsellors throughout the province of Ontario.

Minister, in 2008-09, Durham region's agency assisted clients with \$20 million in debt reduction. Furthermore, in 2008-09, all 23 agencies across Ontario helped 123,000 clients cope with \$765 million in debt.

Sandra Sherk, executive director of Credit Counselling Services of Durham Region, informs me that they have no direct funding. Minister, the agency itself, in 1992, was cut off any kind of provincial support. Would you look into—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I thank the member for the question. It gives me a really great opportunity to talk about what consumer services does. We have a lot that we're proud of in this ministry. Last year, in fact, we had 55,000 complaints and inquiries in our ministry on a number of different issues, including some of the issues that the member has brought up. What I can tell you is that of all these consumer complaints that we have received, we had over \$528,000 in mediated refunds and cancelled or rescinded contracts for consumers. Our number one priority is the protection of consumers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. John O'Toole: Your government's record of squandering public money on untendered contracts—the eHealth scandal is just one example. Why don't you take the time to support community-based agencies to help families stay out of bankruptcy?

The Ontario Association of Credit Counselling Services estimates that 80% of their clients' financial situations improved thanks to credit counselling. In 2008-09, agency programs helped clients repay \$40 million in the last 10 years, saving \$347 million; 98% of the people never returned for credit counselling.

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Minister, wouldn't you agree it makes more sense to invest in agencies that help families pay off their personal debt rather than hiring high-priced consultants like in eHealth? Why don't you help these people in this time of economic collapse in Ontario?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I am so surprised that this member is asking me this question. We support them; you cut them—you cut them.

For the member, let me just tell you some of our great consumer protections here at the Ministry of Consumer Services. We have a lot of outreach. We have consumer education and outreach, which are central in prevention efforts; every year, we provide a Smart Consumer calendar in several languages—we're very proud of that one; we've delivered approximately 100 public education and community events, and we will continue doing those; and we distribute consumer-protection-focused articles in newspapers all across Ontario.

Our number one concern in the Ministry of Consumer Services is consumer protection, and we will keep doing that.

JARDIN D'ENFANTS À TEMPS PLEIN

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de l'Éducation. Les écoles de langue française de l'Ontario offrent la maternelle et le jardin à temps plein depuis de nombreuses années. Pour ce faire, ils ont créé des partenariats qui ont développé et stabilisé des services et entreprises de langue française dans leur milieu respectif. Le projet de loi 242 aura pour impact d'augmenter l'assimilation des francophones.

Ma question est simple : pourquoi la ministre de l'Éducation veut-elle assimiler les petits Franco-Ontariens et les petites Franco-Ontariennes?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I have to say I'm very surprised by this question. I can confirm today quite unequivocally that that's certainly not the intention of Bill 242. This is about providing early learning opportunities for four- and five-year-olds in the province of Ontario in all four publicly funded school systems.

I'm happy to have this opportunity to make very clear in this Legislature that Bill 242 is about providing a groundbreaking experience. There is no other jurisdiction in North America that has made this commitment or this investment for the youngest learners in our school systems. I'm happy to have the opportunity to make that very clear today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: La ministre peut dire que ce n'était pas ses intentions, mais le chemin de l'enfer est plein de bonnes intentions qui tournent mal. Les communautés de langue française sont fragiles, et les institutions doivent être protégées. Les associations des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques et catholiques francophones de l'Ontario craignent non seulement que le projet de loi 242 ne favorise l'assimilation des élèves francophones, mais qu'il ne mène également à la perte de services, d'entreprises de langue française, suite à l'annulation de partenariats pour les services avant et après les heures de classe.

Ma question : pourquoi la ministre de l'Éducation ne permet-elle pas le maintien des partenariats de langue française et de l'offre de service de garderie de programmes avant et après l'école—des modèles qui ont été conçus pour et par la communauté francophone?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I want the members of this Legislature to know that this government, my ministry and I have been working with—I have met with the head of the trustees' association for the French-language boards, both English and Catholic. I have met with French-language teachers; I went to Ottawa a week ago to do so. I work very closely with my colleague the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs as well.

We certainly respect the uniqueness of the French-language education system in the province of Ontario. We are committed to working with French educators and leadership in the French community to ensure that the quality school system that they have established for students' benefit in the province of Ontario continues to

be the case. We believe that our initiative, Bill 242, the early learning initiative for four- and five-year-old students, is very important. It's something that parents are saying to us they want and want desperately—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

APPOINTMENT OF OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table an order in council appointing André Marin as temporary Ombudsman for a period of six months commencing April 1, 2010.

On this matter, I beg the indulgence of the House for just a moment. The order in council just announced references a temporary appointment for a parliamentary officer. While I cannot compel them to do so, in a circumstance where an order in council deals with a matter of significance to this House, it is, in my view, incumbent on the government to ensure that this House is informed before it is made public. It is not appropriate for members of this House to be reading about it in the morning paper. There are a number of usual channels by which the government might do this, and I would recommend that they avail themselves of those in the future.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to correct the record, if I may. In the question to the minister this morning, the actual cancellation of credit servicing occurred in 1992 under the then Liberal Premier, Bob Rae.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is a point of order; the member can correct his record.

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oshawa on a point of privilege, which he has provided notification for.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have some strong concerns. Monday last, I brought forward a point that I had great concern with. Today, I intend to show how, as an elected official of this Legislature, our privileges appear to be circumvented. My issue is twofold.

Firstly, the Minister of Education has used government or ministerial funding to advertise and promote a program that does not have the approval of this Legislature. The issue is not the contents of the program but the process by which the commitment has been made prior to the introduction of the legislation.

Speaker Curling's ruling on February 22 specifically states: "In my opinion, the wording and the tone of the documents are not dismissive of the legislative role of the House." The previous ruling by Speaker Curling goes on to state that previous communication contained "conditional phrases such as 'intends to introduce legislation,' 'we are proposing' and 'legislation that, if passed.'"

The information produced by the Ministry and/or Minister of Education specifically states “full-day learning is taking place this September.” I would submit these. These are government documents that were distributed to each elected official’s office. It clearly states full-day learning is starting in September 2010. It goes on to specifically show how it is the Queen’s Printer that produced this information with no stated provision for the passage of the legislation.

In the explanatory note of the proposed legislation, it specifically states, “In particular, subsection 2(1) of the bill amends subsection 8(1) of the act by authorizing the minister to issue policies and guidelines respecting full-day junior kindergarten and kindergarten. Subsection 4(1) of the bill amends subsection 11(1) of the act by adding authority to make regulations respecting full-day junior kindergarten.” This clearly demonstrates that legislation is needed to pass prior to the implementation of any actions that the ministry is allowed to do.

That was one of the key issues that I would ask you to review. Is it possible that the ministry can move forward and spend government funds on advertising promoting a program that has no provisionals listed inside that information?

Now, the second aspect that I wish to look at is asking for a ruling pertaining to the proposed legislation now before the House. Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to review the process by which the Ministry of Education is given authority to issue full approvals to implement the program prior to the passage of legislation.

On January 12, 2010, from the Durham District School Board: “Durham District School Board receives approval for full-day early learning sites 2010-11.” I could go on and state the fact that there are no provisionals listed inside the information provided to the school board. This would allow the movement forward for all-day kindergarten learning. But this bill was not introduced into the Legislature until February 17. This provision and news release were issued on January 12 of the same year, prior to the introduction of the legislation.

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I, as an official, or an elected individual, as every one of us in this House, is given the opportunity to review legislation, to get input from our constituents, and to come forward and bring our perspectives forward.

By moving forward and giving boards the full authority to implement something with no provision, or by advertising the specifics that it is taking place, I believe that our ability as parliamentarians has been circumvented.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask for your ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader on the point of privilege.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I did write to you on March 23 with respect to the point of order that was raised by the member for Oshawa in the Legislature that day.

I would note that on October 27, 2009, the government announced that it would proceed with full-day early

learning for four- and five-year-olds in the fall of 2010. We advised district school boards across the province that funding to support it would be provided to them outside of the annual school board funding regulations.

It’s the government’s opinion that the funding for this purpose is authorized, pursuant to the power of the Minister of Education under paragraph 24 of section—

Interjections.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Do you want the answer, member for Oshawa?

Interjection.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize.

Under paragraph 24 of subsection 8(1) of the Education Act, which authorizes grants to school boards for, among other things, “projects to promote the advancement of education.” A number of district school boards in Ontario already offer full-day kindergarten programs—a number of our French boards, in particular. I know that in my riding of Nipissing, my Catholic school board is already providing full-day kindergarten.

While it is not required to implement full-day early learning this fall, the government has also introduced Bill 242, as was noted by the member for Oshawa. The bill, if passed in its present form, would establish the legal framework governing the long-term implementation of the government’s full-day learning initiative and provide additional clarity to district school boards, teachers, staff, families and other stakeholders. It’s not required but it will provide clarity and it will provide the framework.

As I stated, a number of schools in various districts and different boards across the province are already providing full-day learning. Full-day learning will start in September 2010, and this legislation will give us some more clarity around the details of that and will provide assistance in the implementation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Oshawa for providing the notice of his point of privilege, and I thank the honourable government House leader for her interjections.

As the honourable member from Oshawa knows, I have still taken under review and consideration his previous point of order. I will reserve decision on this point of privilege and take that into consideration as a whole.

I would appreciate the honourable member providing me with any documents that he has made reference to today. I understand that you have left them with the table; I thank him for that. We’ll undertake a thorough review of the point raised.

ORDER-IN-COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I stand on a point of order because I want to comply with the requirement that a point of order be raised in a timely manner. My point of order is with respect to the government’s actions around the order in council that has just been tabled with the House.

I know that the Speaker cannot engage in statutory interpretation—statutory. That is the function of the courts. I also know full well that the order in council, on its face, is valid. Therefore, there's nothing that could be done in this Legislature that would in any way upset this order in council.

However, the reason why I rise on a point of order—and I'm referring you now to Maingot, *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, Second Edition. It's an interesting observation by Maingot on page 223: "A failure to follow an established practice would invoke a 'point of order' rather than a 'question of privilege.'"

Because, you see, Speaker, I believe there may well also be an issue of privilege here, which requires written notice and which does not have to be raised in a timely way. I will be addressing that in due course.

I don't expect a ruling on the point of order because, with respect, although Maingot, amongst others, points out that a point of order is not a matter of privilege, this is one of those unique situations wherein we have a point of order, as well as, I submit, a point of privilege intertwined. The two go hand in hand.

Just one more reference very briefly, page 225 of Maingot, referring of course to Erskine May: May distinguishes between breaches of privilege and contempts in the following way, but the important thing is, "When any of these rights and immunities, both of the members, individually, and of the assembly in its collective capacity"—so we're talking about a point of privilege now—"which are known by the general name of privileges, are disregarded," then you have a breach of privilege.

I want to simply put my marker in in terms of timeliness of the point of order. I don't want to be accused of or be exposed to the argument that I'm barred from pursuing this point of order because I'm not being timely.

Of course, the issue is around the government acting unilaterally when there is a practice that has been developed here and especially within the context of the Ombudsman Act and the nature of that statute of course, which requires that the appointment of an Ombudsman be upon the address of the assembly. There is no provision in the Ombudsman Act for an interim Ombudsman as there is, for instance, in the Members' Integrity Act for the Integrity Commissioner. There is no need in the Auditor General Act because of course the Auditor General in that statute enjoys his or her office after the expiration date until such time as a successor is in fact appointed on the address of the assembly.

This refers back, of course, to your comments earlier in this last few minutes about these being officers of the assembly, officers of the assembly, officers of the assembly who are accountable to us as a collective body, who are non-partisan, who are politically independent. It's my respectful submission—again, look, am I calling for anybody to be sanctioned here at the end of the day? Of course not, and I'll be dealing with the matter of privilege in more detail after giving written notice.

It's not a matter of sanctioning anybody. It's a matter of you, sir, having the opportunity to help us understand what an officer of the assembly is and what sort of protocols must be followed in the course of appointing or reappointing an officer of the assembly. I leave it at that for the moment, with respect. I suspect it will be after our Easter break because we'll be preoccupied with the budget and, with respect, I suspect it'll be after the Easter break that we'll be pursuing the point of privilege with the appropriate material. I'm pleased to do so then. So I don't expect a ruling of any sort now, but I simply wanted, as I say, to make my point of order in a timely way, knowing full well I have to give written notice of a point of privilege.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: We share the concerns that have been laid out by the House leader for the third party in the way that this notice was received by the official opposition and, in fact, all members of this assembly, which you have commented on yourself and have opened that door.

We'll be dealing with this in the point of privilege and questioning the actions using section 7 of the act as the justification for making this decision at this time, because none of the criteria that are cited in the act in section 7 actually apply in this case, and we will deal with this in much more detail when we deal with the point of privilege, but there are specific things that have to occur for the government to use section 7, and it is our position that none of those apply here, as cited in the act.

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So we will be dealing with this, and we share your view that by convention and tradition in how this has been done in the past in appointing officers of the assembly, the actions of the government in this case, on this occasion, certainly did fly in the face of that tradition and did not respect the convention that has been the case in this assembly for some time now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would note that a letter went from the Speaker to all three parties on March 24, which was yesterday, advising that there was concern that agreement would not be reached in time for the Ombudsman's appointment prior to the termination of his term, which is March 31. That was also raised verbally with me by the other two House leaders.

As cabinet was sitting yesterday, an order in council was passed appointing the temporary Ombudsman. This is in complete alignment with section 7 of the legislation, which reads, "If the Ombudsman is unable or neglects to perform the functions of his or her office, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may appoint a temporary Ombudsman, to hold office for a term of not more than six months...." This has been done time and again in the past.

I would first of all note that this is actually not a point of order or privilege. I look forward to hearing the point of privilege from my colleague; I don't believe that it actually is either, but I do want to address the issues that were raised. I would note the precedents, Mr. Speaker—

I'm sure you have them available to you—of temporary appointments by order in council in March 2005; January 2000; September, June, April and March 1989; and February 1984.

There were a number, obviously, in alignment with section 7 of the act, and, appropriate at that time, there was no consultation that I know of prior to those orders in council being made. While I have taken the opportunity this morning to apologize to my fellow House leaders for not advising them at 5 o'clock yesterday when this order in council was approved by the Lieutenant Governor, I do not feel that this is in any way a violation of the privilege or the standing orders of this Legislature.

I do note that my colleague has noted that it is valid. I also note that my colleague's leader has noted in a very public way that her view was that the incumbent Ombudsman should automatically keep his job until a successor is named; that is to say, there should not be an interim or short-term appointment. Unfortunately, that's not what the legislation provides, but that is in fact what is happening in this case. I believe we have taken a judicious approach, in that the appointment was going to expire next Wednesday. I don't know what time of day it would expire, but we would have been very close, given that cabinet sits on Wednesday.

Mr. Speaker, I have already verbally apologized, and to this House I apologize, through you, to the members and to the House leaders for not advising them at 5 o'clock yesterday, but I feel that what has happened is completely appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Look, nobody's angry with Ms. Smith, and nobody expects her to apologize. Ms. Smith has been diligent in her own right in her capacity as House leader. Of course, orders in council are determined by cabinet; Ms. Smith doesn't prepare them. The Speaker knows, because I sent the Speaker a letter on March 24, with a copy to Ms. Smith, in response to the Speaker's letter the same day warning House leaders about the imminent end of Mr. Marin's term, saying that New Democrats proposed that the House leaders, the Speaker and the Clerk meet promptly to address this matter. The New Democrats took that clear position.

The New Democrats have also tabled legislation that would emulate the Auditor General Act and allow the Ombudsman to keep his or her office until such time as a successor has been chosen. With respect, one cannot go behind historic orders in council. I have the orders in council. The orders in council talk about a number of—"pursuant to provisions in section 7 of the Ombudsman Act, Wendy Ray is appointed temporary Ombudsman." We can't go behind that. There is no record. You see, there was a determination at that point that there was compliance with section 7. Today, here and now, we can, because it's not a matter of historic record. I've said you can't go behind the face of this, but the correspondence that's been exchanged, the Speaker's role as chair of a tripartite hiring committee, the Speaker having warned

House leaders of the termination of the term of the current Ombudsman and the statutory conditions under which we're operating, I think, compel this Chair to hear the point of order and point of privilege.

I'm simply responding to my honourable colleague's suggestion that there is no point of privilege, no point of order. I submit that the case can be made, at least to the point where the Speaker is to consider it. We know that no debate around a privilege can take place until the Speaker determines it's a *prima facie* breach of privilege. "*Prima facie*," of course, means—Ms. Smith will be familiar with this. You've got court decisions like the *United States of America v. Sheppard*—on its face, without rebuttal. That's what *prima facie* means: on its face, at first glance, without a rebuttal that there is a breach.

We haven't reached that point yet. I'm asking this Speaker merely, once proper notice has been filed—a written notice—to hear those arguments.

Thank you, sir.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: By way of expansion and clarification, because the government House leader has cited the part of section 7 that they used to support this, we want to make very clear that, as you can tell by the reaction in the House, this is not an objection to the decision that was made. It is concerning the way that this decision was arrived at. This House clearly supports the decision to reappoint Mr. Marin for this term.

But she used the part of section 7 that speaks to "unable or neglects to" conduct. There is no evidence whatsoever that Mr. Marin is unable to continue in his role and there is no evidence to suggest that he is neglecting to continue in his role. They're talking about timing. In other parts of the section it could be through "death or resignation"—he hasn't passed away and he hasn't resigned—or if "the Legislature is not in session." The Legislature is in session and will continue to be in session to March 31.

So if the government is using that section, it has not met those criteria. There is a cabinet meeting next Wednesday when this could have been dealt with and proper notice and proper consultation and involvement with the other two parties could have taken place, should the government have chosen to do so.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: In the interests of being conciliatory, why don't we just remedy this? Why doesn't the government just bring forward a motion for this assembly's consideration that would extend the term of Mr. Marin for six months, such that this assembly could consider it and vote as individual members wish? I don't know what the outcome of the vote would be. You see, when we come down to it, it's one of those things that could be remedied so quickly. The apology isn't necessary. We don't want an apology, but we could remedy

this by letting the assembly make decisions about its officers. It's just a modest proposal.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: The government has complied with section 7 of the Ombudsman Act. There is no precedent for a motion being brought to the House for an interim appointment or a temporary appointment, so there will be no motion brought at this time. There is no precedent.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the member from Welland, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the government House leader for their comments on the point of order that was raised.

I note in the honourable member from Welland's comments that there may be a point of privilege raised at a later date and I will deal with that, if and when that happens.

I want to make it clear to all members that it's not for me, as Speaker, to be making any determination on the legality of the order in council. To me, the issue at hand is the duty to inform the House when such an order has been signed.

With that, I thank all members.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1200 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member for Windsor–Tecumseh and page Erin Gaudette, to welcome her father, Matthew; her uncle Dave Thibideau; and friend Jamie Bowie to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome some guests of mine from the community of Aylmer, Ontario: the staff and students from the Old Colony Christian School, who will be joining us today at Queen's Park. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PURPLE DAY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's a pleasure for me to rise today and speak briefly about Purple Day. Purple Day is held each year on March 26, and is dedicated to raising awareness about epilepsy. It is named for the internationally recognized colour for epilepsy: lavender.

For me, this year's Purple Day holds significance. This evening, I will be attending the inaugural gala for Epilepsy Durham Region hosted by UOIT, Durham College and Trent University, Oshawa campus, in my riding. I was honoured this year to be asked to be one of the honorary co-chairs for this event.

Funds raised this evening will ensure that Epilepsy Durham Region can continue to maintain their community grassroots programming for the clients they serve.

Epilepsy Durham Region has been a vigorous advocate for people with epilepsy since 1987. What is unique to Epilepsy Durham Region is that they have been providing programs and services to my constituents without any government or United Way funding. They are truly committed to their guiding principles of improving the quality of life for those living with epilepsy and their families in Durham region.

Fifty million people worldwide have epilepsy, and every day in Canada, 42 new people will learn that they too have epilepsy. There are more people living with epilepsy than with multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and Parkinson's disease combined.

In closing, I urge my fellow members in this House to wear purple tomorrow to aid in raising awareness about this most important cause.

PURPLE DAY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: March is the month during which epilepsy organizations hold their celebrations of Epilepsy Awareness Month and Purple Day. On March 26, people from around the globe are asked to wear purple and spread the word about epilepsy. The CN Tower in Toronto and Niagara Falls will be illuminated in purple to showcase their support.

As many of you may know, the organizations representing and supporting people living with epilepsy see March 26 as their official awareness day. But March 26 has never been officially recognized by the government of Ontario as epilepsy awareness day and, as was brought to my attention by activist Margaret Maye, president of Epilepsy Cure Initiative, those living with epilepsy and their family members would like to see that changed. Margaret is here, and I have just tabled a motion to that effect.

I would ask my colleagues to support my resolution to make March 26 officially epilepsy awareness day in the province of Ontario, with the hope that we can build greater understanding and support for people with epilepsy and eventually find a cure for these seizures. Thank you, Margaret Maye, for all your work.

SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would like to commend the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario for their unique approach to raising funds and awareness to make a real difference in the lives those affected by schizophrenia. This year, they have raised their money across numerous cities in Ontario by hosting a "yogathon." I was impressed with this idea as it is a very uncommon method, but it proved to be very successful in cities like Windsor, Hamilton, Brockville, Chatham and my home city of London.

The idea of spreading awareness and raising funds at the same time proved to be a very effective combo, especially when it's done through passionate fundraisers like Karen McSpadden, Kim Jovichevich and Laurel Catton, who together raised over \$2,000.

The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario is focused on finding a cure, and early intervention and awareness. They have been providing these services since 1994, and they have worked tirelessly to break the stereotypes associated with the disease. I would like to thank the SSO for being a fundamental part of the health and welfare of Ontarians. I hope to see more unique events like the yogathon in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for allowing me to do this statement.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise to bring forward the concerns of the 24 Ontario YMCAs over the government's flawed full-day kindergarten plan. Yesterday, my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka and I met with Tom Coon and Fiona Cascagnette of the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka. They made it clear to us that if Bill 242 is passed in its current form, it will destabilize Ontario's child care system and leave parents with fewer options and higher costs.

The bill prohibits school boards from partnering with local child care providers and operating extended day programs before and after school. This is a mistake. The YMCA has a proven model for child care delivery that not only works for parents but is cost-effective.

"If school boards are required to establish and operate extended day programs in addition to programs already on-site or close by, we'll have duplication on a massive scale," Mr. Coon told us. He went on to say, "Eighty-one per cent of YMCA child care centres in the province are located in schools. In Simcoe-Muskoka, 43 of their child care centres are located in schools."

What's more, if four- and five-year-olds are taken out of care of the groups like the YMCA, like this bill proposes to do, they will face increased operating costs that will result in higher fees for parents.

Let there be no mistake: Parents should be worried about this bill. It will harm quality child care delivery in Ontario, and it will drive the price of child care for the youngest and most vulnerable children through the roof.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Glen R. Murray: Our government's Open Ontario plan will help families and businesses affected by the global economic crisis. We're implementing initiatives that will create new jobs and make Ontario stronger and more competitive.

We are already seeing positive results. For example, Ontario saw 7,100 net new jobs added in February, which can be added to the 30,300 new jobs that were created in January. Even sectors hit hard by the global recession,

such as our manufacturing sector, are seeing their job numbers go up. This sector increased by 12,600 jobs in February, which is on top of the increase of 8,400 jobs in January. Since October 2003, the Ontario economy has increased by 331,700 new jobs, and we are committed to bringing even more jobs to our province.

Our new five-year Open Ontario plan will open up our province to new economic opportunities such as clean water technology and mining, which will create more jobs and growth in our province. It is clear that our plan is putting Ontario on the right track. Our government understands that the best way to overcome the challenges of this global recession is by building a strong workforce and a powerful Ontario economy.

FOOD FREEDOM DAY

Mr. John O'Toole: Speaker, with your indulgence, I would first like to seek unanimous consent to wear the purple and mauve ribbon in respect to epilepsy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My statement is about Food Freedom Day. Members will recall that Food Freedom Day in Ontario fell on February 12 of this year. This means that it takes the average family just 43 days to earn enough to cover their annual food costs.

Yet the farmers' share of the retail food price remains relatively small. Only 27% of that goes back to the farm that produces the food, according to the recent Canadian Federation of Agriculture survey. We need a made-in-Ontario support program that will ensure farmers receive a fair return for their work and their investment.

1310

I'd like to remind the House of the recommendations from the Ontario Agricultural Sustainability Coalition. The coalition is asking for a permanent, predictable support program. Ontario pork producers, the cattle industry, grain farmers, fruit and vegetable growers, and veal producers are taking action.

I would urge this House to be proactive in working with farm communities to establish a viable risk management program that ensures the future of agriculture.

I would also like to recognize in the House today Bette Jean Crews, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; Ted Eng from my riding of Durham—he's an organic farmer in Uxbridge and also a local councillor; Charles Stevens of Wilmot Orchards; Kirk Kemp and Mike Gibson from Algoma Orchards; and three young agricultural leaders in my riding: Scott Nesbitt, Scott Swain and Andrew Frew. Farmers grow the food we eat.

EVENTS IN GUELPH

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Last week, I had the pleasure of announcing our government's support of festivals in my community. The province is supporting four local festivals through the Celebrate Ontario 2010 program, with a combined investment of almost \$213,000.

In Guelph, the Guelph Jazz Festival and Hillside Inside will use this funding to expand their programs, attract new audiences and promote tourism in Guelph. The Guelph Jazz Festival will now be able to add a Nuit Blanche component to the festival lineup, hosting events at locations throughout the city all night long. Hillside Inside will be moving to a multi-venue format starting at the new outdoor skating rink at city hall, which we're also helping to fund, and ending at Guelph's River Run Centre. Artistic director Sam Baijal said the grant "will make a big difference in terms of what we can lay out. So it's awesome we are getting this sort of support."

In Centre Wellington, the Fergus Scottish Highland Games and Sensational Elora, which combines visual and performing arts events with local food tourism, both received provincial funding.

We know that tourism is one of Ontario's economic engines. That's why I am proud to be part of a government that gets it and is investing in Guelph area festivals and supporting our local economy.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Charles Sousa: Our government is committed to improving our health care system and ensuring Ontarians can get access to the medical help they need.

That's why we're expanding first-year medical school spaces by 38%. To help achieve that goal, we are opening 54 new first-year medical school spaces at the University of Toronto's Mississauga Academy of Medicine. The academy will be housed in a new four-storey building along with research laboratories and the graduate biomedical communications programs. This campus will open in the summer of 2011 to start training more medical professionals to serve Ontarians. These new learning spaces are in addition to the new undergraduate spaces we opened at medical campuses in Waterloo, Niagara and Windsor. What's more, we also have a new medical school facility under construction at Queen's University in Kingston, and we opened the Northern Ontario School of Medicine in 2005.

On top of that, we've already helped almost 900,000 more Ontarians gain access to a family doctor than in 2003.

We will continue to work with our health care partners to ensure that Ontario's health care system remains strong and that all Ontarians receive the health care they need. Stay healthy, Mr. Speaker, and thank you.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm proud to support the McGuinty government's innovative vision for our province that was outlined in the speech from the throne. These initiatives will strengthen Ontario and make us leaders in a number of key sectors.

For instance, a new Water Opportunities Act will take advantage of our province's expertise in clean water technology to create more jobs and help provide clean water around the world.

What's more, we'll create 20,000 more spaces for students in colleges and universities, and we will open a new Ontario Online Institute to allow students to access their education right from their fingertips on their home computers.

We will improve health care services for patients by encouraging health professionals to work together, and new legislation will improve accountability in our publicly funded health care system.

In addition, we will work with northerners and aboriginal communities to protect our northern boreal forest as we capitalize on northern Ontario's chromite deposits in the Ring of Fire.

These are just a few of the strategies that will open our province to new opportunities and increase our economy. I fully support our government's visionary plan for the future of Ontario.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask members to join me in welcoming my guests from the Old Colony Christian School in Aylmer. Welcome to Queen's Park.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Flynn assumes ballot item number 11, Mr. Qaadri assumes ballot item number 13, Mrs. Cansfield assumes ballot item number 23 and Mr. Zimmer assumes ballot item number 67.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to be first in the presenting of petitions here today on the day of the budget, which is an important day, one that will surprise all of us. My petition reads as follows:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of" all the "goods and services that families and businesses buy" and use "every day." Just a very few "examples include coffee" in the morning, "newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil"—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, is it going to be in the budget?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Read the petition, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, they're heckling me—"haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming"; personal care, "home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care"; human care, "legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements; and"—the list is too long.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in" the largest progressive tax increase "the health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again"—what a surprise.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and" small "businesses."

I'm pleased to sign this and support this and present it to one of the pages, Erin.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to present a petition from the people of Elliott Lake in the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making positron emission tomography, PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under conditions where PET scans have been proven to be clinically effective; and

"Whereas by October 2009, insured PET scans will be performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Anthony.

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the health of the First Nations youth in Ontario is of growing concern;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To continue the partnership with the Right To Play partnership with the Moose Cree First Nation;

"To expand the Right To Play program to other First Nations communities; and

"To follow up these programs to ensure that other initiatives continue to promote the health of First Nations youth in Ontario."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and send it to the table with page Jameson.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here presented to me by Lillian "Christine" Sarko-Houle, Brian Caldwell and Tammy Everest from the town of Tillsonburg. It's signed by over a thousand of my constituents, and it is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

"Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

"Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies' decisions; and

"Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the members of the provincial Parliament of Ontario to enact legislation in support of the Ombudsman of Ontario to have the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies (CAS)."

Thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition. I will affix my signature as I agree with this petition.

1320

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mrs. Liz Sandals: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas violent crime and gangs have been a problem in our communities; children require safe schools and safe streets in order to thrive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To continue with their support of the guns and gangs program;

"To continue to recognize the importance of a strong and educated police force;

"To continue to support rehabilitation programs;

"To continue to keep education as a top priority; and

"To continue to make our streets and schools safe places to be."

I totally support this, I will affix my name and hand it to George.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, more specifically from the children's aid society of Durham. I recognize Wanda Secord, executive director, and the board of Durham children's aid. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

"Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

"Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies' decisions; and

"Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the members of the provincial Parliament of Ontario to enact legislation in support of the Ombudsman of Ontario to have the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies (CAS)."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to page Erin. It's her second page today; she's very busy.

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has taken an important step in its decision to implement full-day kindergarten; and

"Whereas children between the ages of six and 12 years continue to suffer from a lack of accessible, quality programs; and

"Whereas unlike youth and children in their early years, more than one million children six to 12 years old across Ontario are being left behind because of a lack of dedicated funding for accessible, quality middle childhood programs; and

"Whereas failure to increase middle childhood programming threatens a child's safety, education, and social development as they prepare to face the challenges of the approaching teen years; and

"Whereas implementing effective middle childhood programs increases self-esteem, improves school per-

formance, and enhances quality of life for both children and their families; and

"Whereas Charles Pascal, in his 2009 report *With Our Best Future in Mind*, provides a framework and strategy for implementing a provincial structure for middle childhood programs across Ontario; and

"Whereas investing in middle childhood programs is part of Ontario's economic stimulus strategy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest now in children six to 12 years old across Ontario and implement the recommendations made in the *With Our Best Future in Mind* report."

I agree with this and give it to Snigdha to be delivered. I'm going to affix my signature.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: This is a petition from my constituents in Ottawa Centre.

"Whereas, in the 2006 budget, the McGuinty government allocated \$63.5 million for child care for each of the next four years. Each year since, \$63.5 million went to support our vital child care services;

"Whereas, if the province does not continue this funding in the 2010 provincial budget, municipalities will have no option but to make dramatic cuts to child care subsidies, destabilizing the entire system;

"Therefore, be it resolved that in the 2010 budget we call on Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan to:

"(1) Ensure the province provides sufficient funding to maintain existing levels of child care service and recognize cost-of-living and other legitimate increases in operating costs; and

"(2) Provide all necessary tools to support the transition to an early learning program, including base funding for child care programs to support operations and wages comparable to the full-day learning program, in order to ensure the child care system remains stable and sustainable."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table via page Sabrina.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of Bill Murdoch, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars"—I don't hear any outrage—"heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral

services, gym memberships”—sports memberships—“newspapers,” lawyers, accounting and financial services fees; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and,” more importantly, poor and low-income families;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ...

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers” on July 1, 2010.

I’m pleased to sign and support this on behalf of Bill Murdoch and present it to Anthony, one of the pages.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas early childhood learning is a fundamental program in the development and education of Ontario’s youth;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“To continue to expand full-day learning across the province;

“To continue to make our children a priority for this government;

“To continue investments in the infrastructure of our education system;

“To continue to support Ontario’s families through these initiatives; and

“To never go back to the days of forgotten children and mismanagement of schools we saw in the 1990s. We applaud the new investments in full-day learning and look forward to their continued growth across the province.”

I agree with this petition. I’m going to sign it and send it with Harsh.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s lonely at the top. Anyway, a petition to the Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

“Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

“Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people’s complaints about children’s aid societies’ decisions; and

“Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to anyone, including the Ontario Ombudsman’s office;

“Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the members of the provincial Parliament of Ontario, to enact legislation in support of the Ombudsman of Ontario to have the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province’s children’s aid societies....”

I’m pleased to support André Marin as the new Ombudsman, and this petition, and present it to Snigdha.

EPILEPSY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition deals with the Epilepsy Cure Initiative.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas more than 300,000 Canadians have epilepsy and some of the leading epilepsy organizations in Ontario have already proposed improvements in specialized care for those afflicted with epilepsy, and that there is a need for improved access to these programs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Improve access to epilepsy care programs by developing and establishing highly specialized epilepsy treatment centres in Ontario.”

I absolutely agree with this. I’m going to give it to Diana and I’m going to sign it as well.

TAXATION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I’m pleased to present a petition and I’m thankful I’m not the first speaker because that way speakers prior to me can hear the real words. This is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas a duplicated tax system puts our businesses at a disadvantage by increasing the costs of doing business; and

“Whereas a single, unified tax system reduces the burden on business by removing the provincial sales tax on goods and reducing administrative costs; and

“Whereas both Conservative and Liberal members of the provincial and federal Legislatures have voiced their support of a single sales tax; and

“Whereas local chambers of commerce, economists and experts are also supporting the move to a single tax system; and

“Whereas the recent RBC Economics report found that the HST is improving the competitiveness of Ontario businesses by lowering the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

“Whereas a harmonized sales tax is expected to create jobs for Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government of Ontario’s plan to implement the HST and other tax reforms to benefit Ontario businesses and consumers.”

I attach my signature to that, as I do agree, and I will pass it to Jameson.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to read the offsetting petition, which offsets pretty well everything the member from Ajax-Pickering said. This is the truth. It reads as follows:

"Whereas residents of Durham do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they buy and "use every day"—this is signed by thousands of people; "and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new ... tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships," sports memberships, fitness memberships, "newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees," financial planner fees—the list goes on; "and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families," farmers "and low-income" people—everyone who lives here;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That" Dalton McGuinty "not increase taxes" on July 1, 2010, Canada Day. Don't affect Ontario families.

I'm pleased to sign and support this.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for petitions has ended.

Pursuant to standing order 58(b), this House is recessed until 4 p.m.

The House recessed from 1332 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2010 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2010

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I move, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Duncan has moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

I would beg the indulgence of all members to allow the pages to deliver the budget, and I'd just ask right now that you ensure that—

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The members of our caucus were not allowed out of the lock-up. With only two minutes to get here, we are still waiting for our members. I would beg the indulgence of the House to allow this proceeding to wait

until such time as the rest of our members have arrived, including—

Mr. Ted Arnott: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: I think it's worthwhile to point out that it is a long-standing tradition [*inaudible*] Legislature are allowed to go into a lock-up in advance of the budget. But, as we tried to leave the lock-up at about five minutes to 4, we were told by the OPP that they were waiting for word from the Minister of Finance's office. They kept us back so that we literally had to race over here—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. I would just say to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, we do not need to rise on points of order to rag the puck. I will give members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition enough time to enter the chamber.

Once again, I would beg the indulgence of all members to allow the pages the opportunity to deliver the budget speech. I would ask that you keep your aisles clear because, as all members—and I'm sure many of our guests—are aware, the pages are endeavouring, as always, to break the record in delivering that speech. The record that they are attempting to break is 20.35 seconds.

Have all members received a copy of the budget?

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I rise to present Ontario's 2010 budget.

Monsieur le Président, je présente aujourd'hui le budget de l'Ontario de 2010.

For the better part of the last two years, the global economy has been mired in deep recession.

The Ontario economy, like most others, has felt the effects of both a global recession and the transformation of key sectors, especially manufacturing and forestry.

I'm pleased to report that some early signs of the recovery have arrived. However, the job losses that have affected Ontario families remain and this government will continue to take action.

Working together, we must continue to create jobs in the short term and continue to lay the foundation for growth and a new prosperity.

Ontario's speech from the throne established a five-year plan to open Ontario to new jobs and economic growth.

The Open Ontario plan will create an Ontario even more open to new ideas, new people, new investment and, most importantly, new jobs.

This budget begins to chart a course to a stronger economic future for the people of Ontario.

Speaker, when the recession hit, Ontarians, like Canadians elsewhere, had to cope with sudden, unexpected job losses that devastated individuals, families and communities.

We are responding with an aggressive job-creation plan.

We are investing \$32 billion in job-creating stimulus. According to the Conference Board of Canada, our investment is supporting over 220,000 jobs this year. Our stimulus plan added nearly a full point to Ontario's gross

domestic product last year, and that is all good for Ontario.

We're also responding with an aggressive training plan.

Many Ontarians need to retrain and learn new skill sets in order to find work and get back on their feet.

As an example, the Kitchener-Waterloo region is a beacon of the new economy, with leading-edge universities, colleges and businesses. Today, more than 2,000 jobs remain unfilled in that region, which is also proudly known as the technology triangle. Yet, there is still a 10.1% unemployment rate there.

This speaks to the importance of skills training and upgrading as part of our jobs strategy.

That's why we've improved the job training services we provide through Employment Ontario. Over one million Ontarians were able to take advantage of skills training, rapid re-employment and summer jobs last year.

We created a program—the first of its kind in Canada—to help laid-off workers train for a new career.

1610

We called it Second Career, and over 27,000 people have benefited from the program.

Today we are announcing that an additional 30,000 people will be participating in Second Career. This will bring the total number of participants to nearly 60,000 since Second Career began.

Starting a new career takes courage and all Ontarians deserve credit for helping their neighbours make a new start.

Speaker, the Open Ontario plan will create even more new opportunities for Ontarians and their children.

We've already laid out some aspects of our plan with two important initiatives: tax modernization and clean energy.

As the economy recovers, the McGuinty government is creating an environment for jobs and for growth.

Our tax plan for jobs and growth is Ontario's most significant tax reform in a generation. It will create jobs and open Ontario to new investment and enhanced growth.

Personal income taxes were reduced on January 1 of this year.

On July 1, we're reducing corporate income taxes, eliminating the capital tax and moving ahead with the harmonized sales tax, the single most important step we can take to create jobs.

Major corporations like Bell Canada, Telus and General Electric have said that, due to our comprehensive tax reforms, they will be making significant new investments right here in Ontario—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Peterborough.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —and yes, right in Peterborough, to my colleague Mr. Leal.

On July 1, our small business tax rate will be reduced to 4.5% and the small business surtax eliminated. This is a powerful incentive for those who create the most jobs in our economy.

Leading economists estimate that within 10 years, our tax plan will create nearly 600,000 net new jobs. It will increase capital investment of \$47 billion and increase household income by 8.8%.

That is good news for all Ontarians.

Clean energy is already a significant source of new jobs. Our plan is helping to create 50,000 new clean energy jobs over three years.

Al Gore calls our plan "the single best green energy program on the North American continent."

Samsung's partnership with Ontario to produce clean energy from wind and sun is just the beginning. This venture alone will create some 16,000 Ontario jobs.

As part of its Open Ontario plan, the government will introduce a new Water Opportunities Act.

The clean water sector already employs some 22,000 people in good, well-paid Ontario jobs selling Ontario-made water technologies and services around the world.

Ontario is well placed to become a global leader in the water technology industry. Our proposed legislation will help create still more jobs right here in Ontario.

Our Open Ontario plan is about creating new opportunities and growth for our province.

For example, we are examining whether there is unrealized value in our government businesses that could be unleashed to provide new jobs and opportunities for Ontario families.

In the coming months, we will be talking and listening to Ontarians about how we might proceed.

Education is this government's highest priority.

Monsieur le Président, l'éducation est la plus grande priorité du présent gouvernement.

The Open Ontario plan will build a stronger economy by expanding opportunities in our schools, our colleges, our universities and our trades.

Our plan will make Ontario the first in North America to implement a full-day learning program for four- and five-year-olds.

This innovative education program will begin in September for up to 35,000 kids in nearly 600 schools.

Ontarians are some of the most highly skilled and educated workers in the world. This is our greatest competitive advantage.

Today, 62% of Ontarians have post-secondary education or training, one of the highest attainment rates in the world. This is a remarkable achievement. We know that about 70% of the jobs of the future will require post-secondary education or training.

Open Ontario's goal is to raise Ontario's post-secondary attainment rate to 70%. As a first step, this budget provides \$310 million in new funding for 20,000 new spaces in colleges and universities this year.

Every qualified Ontarian who wants to go to college or university will find a place.

People around the globe want something for themselves and their children that Ontario offers—a quality post-secondary education.

We will aggressively promote Ontario's post-secondary schools abroad and increase international

enrolment by 50% while guaranteeing spaces for all qualified Ontario students.

Our post-secondary initiatives will strengthen our schools and create more Ontario jobs.

Families and communities in the north have been hard hit by the global recession, so we are ensuring that the north benefits from the Open Ontario plan.

Under our plan, northern Ontario will see more jobs and more economic activity.

In spite of the challenges facing the northern economy, we continue to see real success in the region. For instance, Ontario's first diamond mine opened there in 2008.

There are many more new opportunities to be found in the north—particularly in the region known as the Ring of Fire.

For the 21st century, the discovery of chromite in the Ring of Fire, used to make stainless steel, could be as big as the discovery of nickel was in the 19th century.

We are fully committed to working with aboriginal peoples and all northern Ontarians to build on the Ring of Fire's significant potential.

This budget provides funding support for skills training programs to help northern Ontarians be ready for new jobs in this growing sector.

We will appoint a Ring of Fire office to lead our collective efforts to make the possibilities of this exciting development a reality for all northerners.

Together, working with our partners in the north, we will create Ontario jobs and support families while protecting the northern forest region.

Because northern families spend more to heat their homes, we propose a permanent northern Ontario energy credit that will help more than half of all northerners.

The northern Ontario energy credit would provide up to \$130 annually to single people and up to \$200 to families in the north to help with the higher energy costs they face.

Ce crédit représenterait jusqu'à 130 \$ par année pour les personnes seules et jusqu'à 200 \$ pour les familles du Nord afin de les aider à faire face aux coûts d'énergie plus élevés qu'elles doivent assumer.

This program is in addition to the sales and property tax credits already available to all Ontarians.

We will also create a three-year industrial electricity program averaging \$150 million per year for the north. The northern industrial hydro rate would target the industries hardest hit by this recession.

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It would reduce industrial electricity prices by almost 25% based on 2009 levels. The rebates would help qualifying large northern industrial facilities achieve electricity efficiency and sustainability. Most importantly, the industrial hydro rate will help protect and create new jobs for the north and for all northerners.

The federal government presented its budget a few weeks ago.

We were pleased to see that the Canada health and social transfer agreements have been extended for

another year. However, we are very concerned about the expiration of close to \$1 billion in federal transfers for skills training, transit, wait times and housing.

Federal funding for child care is also ending.

Despite this, the McGuinty government will step in and continue funding the child care spaces abandoned by the federal government.

Our investment will equal \$63.5 million a year.

All told, this support will help 1,000 child care workers keep their jobs. It will help about 8,500 Ontario children stay in child care—a crucial investment that will help keep Ontario families working.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Ontarians who care passionately about child care to join us in our fight for better child care for all Ontarians and their families.

Mr. Speaker, when the world economy fell into recession, a variety of organizations, including the International Monetary Fund, recommended that governments around the world spend up to 2% of their GDP to fund job-creating stimulus plans.

Like most western governments, Ontario responded with a rigorous jobs plan that economists are now saying is helping families, growing communities and creating jobs.

As economies return to growth, governments must return to balanced budgets—and our government will.

As I said in the fall, our government will reduce the size of the deficit every year.

For the year just ending, we forecast a reduced deficit of \$21.3 billion—a notable improvement since I last reported to Ontarians, last fall.

Ontario is expected to be one of the leading provinces in Canadian GDP growth this year. Canada and the US are expected to lead growth among the G7.

Our planning assumptions for economic growth, which are based on private sector forecasts, are 2.7% real GDP growth this year, moving to 3.3% in 2011. That is significant progress. That means good news for Ontario families and those Ontarians whom we're helping to find work.

In 2011-12, the deficit will drop to \$17.3 billion, and then fall to \$15.9 billion in 2012-13.

We will cut the current deficit in half in five years and eliminate the deficit in eight years.

Our path to recovery is fair, our path to recovery is realistic, and above all else, our path to recovery is responsible.

Reducing the deficit is about a sustainable future for our children and ensuring that our tax dollars are spent wisely.

A significant risk for Ontario and other governments is the possibility—some would argue the probability—of rising interest rates.

Every 1% increase in interest rates would cost Ontario an additional half-billion dollars every year.

Every additional dollar that goes to interest payments is one less dollar for priority areas such as education or health care.

Mr. Speaker, about 55% of Ontario's total program spending goes towards wages and benefits in the public and broader public sectors.

Our plan for protecting public services like schools and hospitals must acknowledge this reality.

About 1.2 million people are proudly employed in the broader public sector in Ontario.

Ontarians value and appreciate the contributions of those who deliver their public services. They also expect those who are paid by tax dollars to contribute to the sustainability of those public services.

Public servants make a valuable contribution to the health and well-being of this province. They are an important part of our well-educated workforce.

That is why we will not propose mandatory unpaid days off.

This is why we will honour all existing collective agreements.

Still, we must take significant steps to control expenses in one of our largest spending lines so that we can protect and preserve public services like education and health care.

Members of provincial Parliament will lead by example and take a three-year salary freeze, extending our current freeze for two more years.

In addition, the government will introduce legislation that would freeze compensation structures of non-bargained political and Legislative Assembly staff for two years.

The legislation would also freeze compensation structures for all non-bargained employees in the broader public sector and Ontario public service for two years.

For those represented by bargaining agents, we will respect all collective agreements.

However, the fiscal plan provides no funding for incremental compensation increases for any future collective agreements.

Par contre, le plan financier de la province ne prévoit pas de fonds pour des hausses salariales dans les conventions collectives futures.

As contracts are renegotiated, the government will work with transfer partners and bargaining agents to seek agreements of at least two years' duration. These agreements will provide no net increase in compensation, will help manage spending pressures and protect the public services that Ontarians rely on.

All of us who are paid with tax dollars have a role to play as we chart the course forward.

We expect our transfer partners to bargain responsibly so that, together, we can all do our part to protect schools and hospitals.

By next year, the legislation would redirect up to \$750 million towards sustaining schools and hospitals and other vital public services.

Controlling compensation is but one important step in our plan to continue managing responsibly.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, Ontarians are committed to a strong public health care system.

Today, we face new challenges and must redouble our efforts.

Just 20 years ago, 32 cents of every dollar spent on government programs were spent on health care.

Today, it's 46 cents. In 12 years, if we don't take action, it could be 70 cents.

So the question now facing us is, how do we fund the best health care while maintaining our investments in schools, helping the vulnerable or protecting the environment?

This year, building on our past achievements, the McGuinty government will launch a plan to reduce generic drug costs for Ontarians.

Currently, Ontarians pay too much for generic drugs. That's why we're planning to reduce the cost of generic drugs to ensure that all Ontarians have affordable access to the prescription drugs they need.

We also plan to introduce legislation that would call on health care professionals and executives to be even more accountable for improving patient care.

We will review the Public Hospitals Act and ensure that the hospital system taps into the expertise of community partners and health professionals.

Across government, we will ensure that we manage responsibly and direct investments to those priorities that are most important to Ontario families.

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Upon completion of our stimulus-related infrastructure projects, we will take a measured approach to planning and construction of some of the government's other capital projects.

Managing responsibly and in a balanced way is our record. This year and in the years ahead, our task is to keep growth in expenditures below growth in revenues.

Our efforts to manage responsibly have delivered results:

—OPS travel costs have decreased by 26% so far this year;

—we froze MPP salaries;

—we reduced OPS senior executive performance pay; and

—with the introduction of the HST, we will reduce the number of full-time OPS employees by 1,253—saving \$100 million a year now and into perpetuity.

Since 2003, Ontario has been one of the most efficient providers of programs and services among provincial governments.

In 2008-09, Ontario general per capita government spending was the second lowest among the provinces, proving that we provide highly efficient services. This year, and going forward, we plan to freeze program administration spending so that Ontario remains one of the most efficient governments in the country.

Building on our previous expenditure management measures and the recent work of the treasury board working group, we will continue with a comprehensive review of all government programs and services.

The comprehensive review will be overseen by the treasury board and will ensure that the government's

resources are focused on delivering the programs and services that support:

- jobs and economic growth;
- access to high-quality education and health care; and
- clean, safe, strong communities, including effective supports for our most vulnerable.

The goal of the review is to move resources from low-priority areas to high-priority areas and to move forward with the Open Ontario plan.

In addition to improving efficiencies, we will also improve access. For example, we provide a wide range of benefit programs to help Ontarians. There are many ways to access these programs and no central hub or source for information.

Our plan is to improve and simplify access to those programs to make it easier for people to find them and more cost-effective for us to administer them.

Speaker, our plan to manage expenses responsibly is fair and balanced. Our plan to manage expenses is the right thing to do.

Speaker, when the recession began, we took action and now that the recovery is on the horizon, we will not rest.

When we came to office in 2003, Ontario faced a deficit, struggling public services, crumbling infrastructure—and no plan for the future.

Our government put a plan in place and took action.

We rebuilt schools and hospitals. We invested in colleges and universities. We built new roads, new bridges, new transit and new water treatment plants.

We supported a greener Ontario, we brought in the Ontario child benefit and raised the minimum wage to make this province a better place to live for all Ontarians.

Our planning has allowed us to invest while balancing budgets, paying down debt and cutting business and personal taxes.

Speaker, when the global crisis hit, we took action.

We invested in a stimulus plan to protect and create jobs and we reformed our tax system to create hundreds of thousands of jobs in the long term.

Now, through the Open Ontario plan, we continue to take action.

Today, I've announced a plan to take action on post-secondary education and a plan for northern Ontario.

We are taking action to eliminate the deficit and we can ensure the sustainability of our public services that we value as we do that.

As always, our plan is fair.

Our plan is balanced.

Comme toujours, notre plan est équitable.

Notre plan est équilibré.

Our plan is focused on the priorities that Ontarians share.

And those priorities include taking steps today to build a strong Ontario for tomorrow.

Nous ouvrons les portes de l'Ontario—au commerce, aux étudiants, aux possibilités à l'échelle mondiale.

Nous avons ce qu'il faut pour être les meilleurs.

We are opening Ontario's doors—to trade, to students, to global opportunities.

We have what it takes to be the best.

Our Open Ontario plan will get us there.

We can do it, we can do it together. And when we do, we will be bigger, we will be better, we will be stronger.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CREATING THE FOUNDATION FOR JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 POSANT LES FONDATIONS DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA CROISSANCE

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to implement 2010 Budget measures and to enact or amend various Acts / *Projet de loi 16, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2010 et édictant ou modifiant diverses lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

Opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I already spoke.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have a message from the Honorable David Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2010, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m. on Monday.

And for the members' information, the pages' time was 25.54 seconds.

The House adjourned at 1638.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
		Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldeep (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
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Lundi 29 mars 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 March 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 mars 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce page Anthony Caliciuri's mother, Mary Beth Caliciuri, who is here in the members' west gallery; his grandmother Mary Adams; and his sister Katie, who are down to visit Anthony today. I'd like to welcome them to the Legislature.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Some of us woke up this morning to the sound of Cuban music to celebrate the 65th anniversary of bilateral relations between the Republic of Cuba and Canada. In the east gallery, we have some very important guests: the ambassador of the Republic of Cuba, Teresita Vicente, and the Consul General in Toronto, Mr. Jorge Soberón. Congratulations and bienvenidos.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It is my pleasure to introduce the parents of page George Philp: Paula Murphy and Andrew Philp. I'd ask that all members help welcome them here to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Our page Anthony Caliciuri has brought his fan club with him today. We've got his mom, Mary Beth Caliciuri, his sister Katie and his grandmother Mary Adams all here in the members' gallery. Welcome.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Emma Graham is a grade 12 student in St. Catharines, about to start her first year at Queen's University. Emma is the winner of the Youth in Motion Job Shadow a Minister Contest 2010. Her winning essay, selected from over 200 applicants, allows her the chance to spend the day learning about the role of a cabinet minister at Queen's Park. Please join me in welcoming Emma Graham to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to welcome today three Ottawa residents: Cathy Curry, who is the chair of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board; Pam Morse, who is my school board trustee in Nepean-Carleton; as well as the director of education, Lyall Thomson. They were here meeting the minister, and they will meet our critic later today. I'd just like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'd like to welcome a very important delegation from Italy, in fact, from an area where the Minister of Economic Development and Trade

is from and where my mother is from, actually, the area of Friuli. The delegation consists of Daniele Gerolin, a member of the regional government of Friuli-Venezia Giulia of Italy; Ivo Chiarot, the mayor of Sesto Al Reghena; Dorino Papais, Mario Ellero, Cavalliere Gino Vatri, and Silverio and Orianna Gardin. Congratulations and welcome to the Parliament of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further introductions?

I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member for Oakville and page Alexander Bowie, to welcome his mother, Janette-Rose Bowie, his uncle Joseph-Angelo Santi, his aunt Judith-Anne Santi-Derubis, his great-aunt Mary Morelli, his great-aunt Phyllis Morelli, his great-aunt Alma Picone and his great-uncle John Picone, in the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. On Thursday, Ontario families learned that your budget is on track to doubling the provincial debt by 2012, basically mortgaging the future of our children and grandchildren. A good place to start in controlling your spending is at those unaccountable, anonymous bureaucracies that you call the local health integration networks, the LHINs.

Under the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, these LHINs were to be publicly reviewed by March 28, 2010. Today is March 29; no review is in sight. Premier, you're breaking your own law. What makes you above the law in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question and pleased to have an opportunity to speak about our budget. My colleague makes reference to a particular aspect to be found within the budget bill itself, but I would want him, of course, to take into account what we do at a higher level in terms of the budget.

A number of important things—fundamentally, the budget is about jobs and growth. In that budget, we are not only protecting, but enhancing public services for our families, which they are very concerned about. We continue to invest in a strong economy, and as part of that particular plan, we are balancing our budget in a prudent, thoughtful and responsible way. We're taking the appro-

priate amount of time; no more time than is necessary, but not so quickly that we compromise public services or dampen our economic recovery.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's sad how arrogant the Premier has become after six years in office. I asked a very simple, straightforward question about his legislation that would cause a review of these bloated regional health bureaucracies, the LHINs, by March 28, 2010. But buried deep within his own budget, on page 164, it says the McGuinty Liberals are going to arrogantly rewrite their own law and block the Legislature from holding that review, which should have begun as of yesterday.

Premier, I'm going to ask you again. What has happened to you after six years in office? Have you become so arrogant that you believe you're above the law in the province of Ontario? Why are you breaking your own legislation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to speak more directly to my honourable colleague's question this time around. It is quite true that we had originally anticipated that we could and should conduct a review of our local health integration networks by the end of this month. But as it turns out, all of the responsibilities that we wanted the LHINs to take on, they have yet to take on. In particular, a big part of their new responsibilities would be long-term care. Our local health integration networks have not yet done that.

1040

But there are a number of things that we have been doing with a view to ensuring that we are reviewing the operations of our LHINs on an ongoing basis. We asked KPMG to conduct a review for us. They put forward 27 separate recommendations. All of those either have been implemented or are under way. We have an annual review of our accountability agreements to address new issues as LHINs take on additional responsibilities. We think the responsible thing to do is to allow them to take on the responsibilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier uses the term "originally anticipated." I remind you, Premier, that this is your own law. This is a law written by your health minister, passed by your own members, which called for that review to take place by March 28, 2010. You didn't have the courage to make any kind of announcement; you didn't meet with the opposition parties to look for a delay. You buried it in page 164 of your budget bill.

Sadly, this fits a pattern. When the Premier first received a draft report from the Ombudsman on the problems at his LHINs, what was the Premier's response? Well, he's trying to defang the Ombudsman by threatening to take his job away.

We take a different view altogether, Premier. What exactly are you trying to hide at your runaway regional bureaucracies, these so-called LHINs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I know my honourable colleague would want to be accurate in terms of his

presentation of the facts here. There will be a comprehensive review. We have deferred that for two years. We think the appropriate thing to do before we conduct a full-some review is to allow the LHINs to take on their full-some responsibilities, including long-term care. There have been a number of reviews conducted along the way. We take advantage of the results of those reviews and put into place the recommendations.

Before we had LHINs, there were seven regional offices and 16 district health councils. I gather my honourable colleague would prefer that we eliminate the LHINs and bring back seven regional offices and 16 district health councils. We have a fundamental difference of opinion. We believe that we can have confidence in the people in their communities when it comes to local decision-making; hence the LHINs.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: So the Premier is breaking his own law. He is trying to silence the Ombudsman, who has been looking into the problems with your regional health bureaucracies, and I think we have a good understanding of exactly what Premier McGuinty is trying to hide. This time last year, we brought forward revelations of runaway spending and sweetheart untendered contracts through his eHealth boondoggle. After months of denying and deflecting and stonewalling, the Premier was forced to finally end this frenzy for consultants through his untendered contracts.

Premier, on June 17, you said it had come to an end. Why did the central LHIN, within one week of your making that announcement, hand out an untendered contract to Beth Snyder Coaching and Consulting—one week after you said this would come to an end?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our government believes in the value of LHINs; we believe in the importance of integrating our health care system. As we move forward, improving the value for money in our health care system, we're going to need the LHINs to do their work. We have put in place tough new rules around tendering for contracts. As we moved to those new rules, there were some contracts that needed a bit more time to complete their job. So the contracts that the member opposite is referring to were all extensions of existing contracts. We thought the right thing to do was to let that work continue rather than starting over from scratch.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: So let's make sure we have the facts here. The Premier made an announcement on June 17, and then, a week later, your central LHIN gave out a sweetheart untendered contract.

You'd think the Premier or the health minister would show some anger. You'd think they would get to the bottom of this. You'd think there would be a price to pay for breaking the promise that the Premier made. But all we see is a shrug, and again, pass the buck.

Let's be clear: \$42,000 in a sweetheart contract was given out one week after the Premier promised there would be no more. So I ask the health minister, are you not in charge of your own government, or did you simply give a wink and a nod to the LHINs to let the sweetheart deals keep rolling?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Quite the contrary. We have put in place tough new rules. What we inherited in 2003 was not what we needed to do today. We put in place tough new rules—no more sole-source contracts, regardless of dollar value; and consultants will not be paid for hospitality, food or incidental expenses—and we are mandating that the LHINs report to us quarterly on how they are complying with these tough new rules.

I have every confidence that they have embraced the new rules. Let me give you one example: The Waterloo-Wellington LHIN did extend a contract after the new rules came into place. This is a contract to complete a rural health study—I'm sure the member opposite thinks we should make sure that rural health needs are fulfilled in the Waterloo-Wellington region, and I'm sure he would expect us to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Quite frankly, Minister, tough new rules don't matter a whit if you don't have the backbone to stand up and enforce them and make sure the job gets done: \$42,000 handed out in a sweetheart deal after Dalton McGuinty said they would end; we found the LHINs have given out some \$7 million in untendered contracts. Just like we saw at the eHealth boondoggle, your LHINs, the sons of eHealth, are following the same procedure: sweetheart deals to well-connected consultants and then giving out money for contracts for little work or before the contract is even signed.

I ask the health minister: Surely you must be aware of this abuse. Surely you will do something about it. Can you stand in your place in the assembly and say this is the only exception to breaking the rules that you say are so-called tough?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure you that we are very serious about making sure the tough new rules are in fact adhered to. That is why we're mandating quarterly reports from the LHINs. We are doing random audits to ensure that these new rules are being adhered to.

The contract you're referring to—I believe you might want to double-check this—actually started before the new rules were put in place. It began on April 8, 2009, before the new rules came into place.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Last week, Ontario families were waiting for the McGuinty government to make their lives better, protect jobs, properly fund local hospitals and make life more affordable. Unfortunately, the vast majority are still waiting. How could this government leave everyday people

paying more and getting less but find more than half a billion dollars for this year's corporate tax giveaway?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question. Of course, I have a different perspective on the budget, in terms of both its content and its impact.

My colleague asked about help for families. We're pleased that, number one, our budget goes a long way toward providing the reassurance and comfort that our families are looking for. We will continue to increase funding for their schools. More than just protecting schools, we're going to move ahead with full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. When it comes to health care, more than just protecting funding for health care, we're going to continue with our plan to get wait times down.

When it comes to child care, we've now found a way, notwithstanding our economic challenges, to put in place permanent funding for 8,500 child care spaces. That's 1,000 jobs in the child care sector. It helps all kinds of families who are concerned about where their kids are going to be during the course of the day.

Those are specific, concrete examples of how this budget speaks to the needs of Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, federal Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff made a very interesting declaration. He said, "We have a clear choice: tackling the ... deficit and starting to invest in our future, or giving further tax cuts to corporations before when we can afford them."

Can the Premier tell us: Is his federal leader wrong, and if he's not, then why is the Premier barreling ahead with billions and billions of dollars in corporate tax cuts while we are deep in deficit and people's real priorities simply are not being addressed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think I part company with my colleague in terms of exactly what we're doing.

Over the course of the next three years—and I stand to be corrected by the Minister of Finance—I think we're cutting taxes for businesses, to enhance their level of competitiveness and productivity, by about \$4.5 billion. For people—for individuals and families—we're cutting taxes by \$11.8 billion over the course of the next three years. That's going to go a long way toward making things just a little bit easier for our families who are struggling to get ahead.

1050

One of the new things that we're investing in in this budget—I know my colleague will want to support this, of course—is a new energy credit for families who find themselves in northern Ontario and have to grapple with extraordinary costs when it comes to their energy costs. We thought we should give them extra help there, and that's what we've done.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Corporate tax cuts are good for CEOs' families. What I want to know about is the rest

of Ontario families. In this Premier's Ontario, families are going to continue to worry about jobs; they're going to continue to worry about community hospitals that are going to have to keep closing their emergency rooms. The cost of everything from tuition to home heating is going to continue to climb. That's what regular families in Ontario are going to be facing.

Does the Premier really believe that cutting corporate taxes is more important than the concerns that real people have each and every day in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're continuing to bring a balanced approach to managing the people's finances. In addition to our tax reforms, we're also, for example, investing heavily in infrastructure to create some 300,000 jobs over the course of two years. That's important to families. Something else that's very important to families is to ensure that when the kids get to college and university age, there are going to be spaces available for them. In the budget, again notwithstanding our financial challenges, we've decided to fund 20,000 more spaces in our colleges and universities this September. If you take a look at the budget on the whole, it does include a plan for tax reform, but it also includes specific levels of support for our families, whether that's continuing to support health care, education, child care, spaces in colleges and universities, or energy supports for the north.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. For families who rely on front-line health care, this budget means more bed closures, longer waits, delayed surgeries and the loss of more front-line health care services. Ontario nurses have gone so far as to call it the "final nail in the coffin." Does the Premier think cutting corporate taxes is more important than health care for the people of this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: What we've managed to do, again, in our budget is to bring a balanced approach. In addition to our plan for tax reforms, which is all about enhancing our competitiveness and our ability to create good jobs and generate the wealth that we need to support our public services, we also this year are funding our hospitals, their base funding, by another 1.5%. Hospital funding overall is up 4.7% this year, just so we understand what we're talking about.

We've been sitting down, working hard with our partners in the health care sector, in particular our hospital partners, to make sure that they have the appropriate funding and to make sure that they can continue to deliver the quality of services that they've done in the past. I'm confident we have the goodwill and the determination to continue to work together to maintain good-quality health care services for Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For people who are actually hoping for strategic investments in public transit, this budget means more time stuck in gridlock and less time with their families. The Premier has derailed Toronto

transit's plans and the good jobs that are going to go with them. Does the Premier think that cutting corporate taxes is more important than keeping the promise to create jobs and invest in the future by supporting public transit?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I'm going to do something which my honourable colleague is uncomfortable with: We're going to bring balance. In addition to our plan for tax reforms, which is about enhancing our competitiveness and our ability to create jobs and generate wealth that supports our schools and our health care, we're also investing heavily in infrastructure. When it comes to public transit in the city of Toronto and the greater Toronto area, all we have said is that we're going to go ahead with \$11 billion worth of investment in our public transit services.

We said, when it comes to some of the "out" years, that we think we have to slow some of that down just a little bit so that we don't compromise our schools and health care. It's about balance, about being prudent and about keeping in mind what our families are asking of us, and I think we have it just about right in this budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier's message to people who are facing tough times is simply, "tough luck." To people who want green jobs building Toronto's transit system, tough luck. To nurses who want to stay in Ontario to actually take care of Ontario patients, tough luck. With so many hard-working Ontarians out of luck, thanks to this Premier, why is he stubbornly refusing to scrap his decision to pull billions of dollars out of our revenue stream for tax cuts for corporations for the very lucky few?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I just see things differently in terms of our needs at this point in our history and of what our budget is going to accomplish on behalf of all Ontarians. In addition to our tax reforms, I'll repeat: We're finding ways to not only protect but to enhance our public services, we're finding ways to create jobs in an immediate sense by investing in infrastructure, and we're talking about enhancing the strength of our economy over the long run by creating 20,000 more spaces in our colleges and universities. We're helping families in the short term with some 8,500 child care spaces. It's about getting our priorities right in terms of what we need to do right now to help families and what we need to do over the long term to ensure that we've got a strong plan for jobs and growth. That's what this budget is all about.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. As the eHealth scandal was breaking, the Premier made a big show about taking charge. On June 17, he issued a media release and said "From now on, the government and all its agencies will no longer allow sole-sourced contracts for consulting services." But according to freedom-of-information records, the Waterloo-Wel-

lington LHIN handed out three untendered contracts between July 29 and November 9, 2009. Premier, why didn't you just say the new rules don't apply to the LHINs and the consultants to which they're handing out this sweetheart deal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Make no mistake about it: These new rules do apply to the LHINs. The LHINs know it and are complying with it. There were some contracts that needed extensions after the new rules came in place, and that was the right thing to do. It would have been irresponsible to halt those contracts in the midst of their work. Did they continue to study rural health in Waterloo–Wellington? Yes, they did. Should they have done that? Absolutely, yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: This scandalous abuse of taxpayers and their money proves why the public's review of the LHINs simply can't wait; it needs to happen now. The Waterloo–Wellington LHIN handed out almost \$97,000 after the Premier led Ontario families to believe your rules wouldn't apply and put an end to the sweetheart deals. The untendered contract of November 9 shows that not even the resignation of the former health minister on October 6 slowed down the Premier from using this money as a personal slush fund.

Will Premier McGuinty stand in his place now and ensure Ontario families that no other untendered contracts were handed out after you told Ontario families that they had stopped?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The party opposite has made it very clear that their position is to shut down the LHINs and bring all of that power and decision-making ability back to Queen's Park. We have seen what has happened when that power is all here at Queen's Park.

I actually believe in the power of local decision-making. I believe that if we want to move forward to improve health care, we need to do it at the local level and the LHINs are the right organizations to be driving that integration.

Let me give you an example of what happened in Waterloo–Wellington that would not have happened without the LHINs. First Link is a program that provides recently diagnosed individuals with dementia and their caregivers with comprehensive and coordinated supports. They strengthen the linkages between the physicians, the specialists and the caregivers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A question for the Premier: Affordable and efficient rapid transit is the lifeblood of all great cities. Almost all experts agree that if Toronto's Transit City plan is not implemented as quickly as possible, there will be real economic and social damage inflicted on Toronto.

Does the Premier agree with Toronto mayor David Miller that the budget announcement to delay half a

dozen key transit projects is beyond disappointing, that it's an astonishing betrayal of the commitments this government made to the people of the city of Toronto?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, we do not agree with that assessment. In fact, what we have said and what I have said to Mayor Miller personally is that we are not abandoning these projects. We are not walking away from these projects. We are slowing down the implementation of these projects.

What we've said is, over the next five years we need to find a savings of \$4 billion, but we will continue with an investment of more than that to keep these projects going. I've been very clear since I was appointed Minister of Transportation that it is our goal to continue to make investments, to continue to build public transit in Toronto. That's what we're going to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Notwithstanding that statement, the Premier should recognize the facts. The announcement that you made places the Finch Avenue West LRT, the Scarborough rapid transit, the Eglinton Avenue cross-town line and the expansion of York region Viva service in jeopardy. These lines would have served many of Toronto's most transit-dependent residents—people who need good, reliable transit to get to work on time, to get their kids to daycare. It also threatens the bus replacement program and hundreds of jobs in Thunder Bay that will be lost if the new streetcar lines are never built.

Why is this Premier determined to take an axe to transit expansion in Toronto?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's interesting that there is subway tunnelling going on right now against which this party voted. The NDP voted against tunnelling that's happening right now. There is work under way on Sheppard, on the Spadina subway, and on the Georgetown corridor, which your member for Parkdale–High Park has repeatedly opposed.

Those projects that the member for Toronto–Danforth has itemized are projects that are going to be in the discussion with Metrolinx. We're going to determine which of those we're going to be able to go ahead with and how quickly. So we're not walking away from them.

On bus replacement, we're opening up the gas tax rules so that municipalities can use that money for bus replacement.

We are committed to transit. We've already invested \$9.3 billion in public transit. Our record speaks for itself. We're going to continue these projects—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. David Zimmer: My question too is for the Minister of Transportation. Since the budget last Thursday, the media and the pundits have gotten themselves all worked up about the future of transit here in the city of

Toronto. These are important projects. They contribute to a greener city, a stronger economy and an easing of traffic gridlock, which costs us \$6 billion a year. The personal frustration of getting caught in gridlock is a whole other story.

Specifically, Minister, constituents in my riding of Willowdale are really concerned about some LRT projects previously announced. They are concerned that they will not be built. They've been calling me; they're upset. Minister, what's the reality here? What is the rhetoric here? Are you or are you not going ahead with the Transit City projects?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that my colleague from Willowdale wanted to ask me what the reality is—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's sort out the reality from the rhetoric. The reality is that we are continuing with these projects. I want to assure the member for Willowdale and, through him, his constituents, that we are indeed phasing in these projects. We recognize, given the economic global downturn, that we had to make some decisions that were responsible. We will continue to invest more than \$4 billion over the next five years but we have to slow down on some of these projects.

Since 2003, we've invested \$9.3 billion in public transit. We're going to continue to work on these projects.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Let me get very specific here. In Willowdale, there are four Transit City LRT projects that are important to my constituents. They are the Eglinton LRT, the Finch LRT, the Sheppard East LRT and the Scarborough RT line. There are all kinds of rumours and speculation out there floating around about which projects are going forward, which are going to be put on hold and which are going to be delayed. Minister, how are you going to decide which projects go ahead and which projects go on hold?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me first of all say that the Sheppard LRT—the Sheppard project—is already under way. That has already begun. As far as the Finch, Scarborough and Eglinton lines, that conversation is going to happen with Metrolinx. It's very important that we get the advice from the experts at Metrolinx to have that conversation about which ones will go forward.

I just want to emphasize that already in the city, there are projects under way. The Georgetown South corridor, which supports the Pearson-Union air-rail link, is already under way—\$874 million. As I said, there's already work begun on the Sheppard LRT and construction has begun on the Spadina subway project—another \$870 million.

There is a lot of work that has already been done. We're going to be talking about how to phase the rest of the work and continue on those projects.

untendered contract feeding frenzy that saw eHealth hand out sweetheart deals to Courtyard and other Liberal-friendly consultants. But according to freedom-of-information records, the Erie St. Clair LHIN handed out two untendered contracts months after you said your new rules put an end to these sweetheart deals.

Will you finally admit that your LHIN bureaucracies are diverting health care dollars from patients and front-line care with no value in return?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The LHINs are providing tremendous value. They have embraced their new responsibility to integrate services with the patient in mind. The future of health care demands that we do everything we can to integrate health care. Patients know that. This morning, I spoke at a patients summit here in Toronto. They know that integration is the key to the future, and it is the LHINs that are best positioned to do that integration. That is very, very good work that they are performing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: A year ago, the Premier said he put an end to these untendered contracts. Two weeks ago, the spokesperson at the Erie St. Clair LHIN said that the LHIN “no longer has untendered contracts and will continue to comply with all provincial procurement directives.” She must have been referring to a different set of rules because your unelected, unaccountable appointees handed out \$73,000 in untendered contracts that we know of.

The untendered contracts binge at eHealth cost you a minister, a deputy minister and the chair and CEO of eHealth. Who will be held accountable for the untendered contracts binge at the LHINs, Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know that the member opposite is looking for a story here, but I'm afraid there isn't one. The LHINs are doing very good work on the ground, they are adhering to the new rules that are in place, they are reporting quarterly on their adherence to the rules, and we are ensuring that that is in fact happening.

Let me tell you a little bit about something that the Erie St. Clair LHIN has done that I don't think could have been accomplished from here at Queen's Park. In December 2009, the Erie St. Clair LHIN had the lowest ALC days to discharge in the province, at 22 days. What that means is that people who are in hospitals are getting home or into the care they need more quickly than any other place in the province. They've improved wait times, they've got the best wait times in cancer, cataract, hip and CTs. This is good work—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Last year, you made a big show of telling Ontario families that you changed the rules to put an end to the

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. It is difficult, if not impossible, to afford healthy food on the current social assistance rates; the Premier knows

that. The special diet allowance helped Ontarians with severe illnesses such as AIDS, cystic fibrosis and Crohn's disease to access nutritional food. Now, this government has cut the special diet allowance against the recommendation of its own social assistance review panel without any comprehensive evaluation of the program or of better alternatives.

Why is this government heartlessly cutting a program that helps the most vulnerable and the sickest people in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services will want to speak to this in the supplementary—but let me just say this on what motivates us in this particular regard: We have a program which is just not sustainable. In 2001, it was costing taxpayers \$6 million. This year it's up to \$225 million. We're quite confident that if we don't make some changes, it will be up to \$750 million in some five years' time.

The Auditor General has pointed out that there are some real issues here of concern to him which I don't think, in honesty, any of us can duck or avoid. So what we want to do is reform this program to make sure that the supports that we're putting in place—we certainly agree that there are some Ontarians who require special dietary support. We want to put a program in place that in fact does exactly what it's supposed to do.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Cutting a program that many Ontarians rely on for basic survival is cruel and you know it's morally wrong. It is wrong because the deficit should not be reduced on the backs of some of Ontario's most vulnerable people. It is wrong because the increased health care costs will far outweigh any program cost savings. It is wrong because making cuts now undermines the social assistance review process that this government and all parties in this House have spent years developing.

At the very least, why won't the Premier leave the special diet allowance in place until the social assistance review findings are complete at the end of next month?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just so we put this in some context, so that Ontarians understand what we're fundamentally all about: Notwithstanding our financial challenges, we continue to move ahead with the Ontario child benefit. We're continuing to move ahead with full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. We have found permanent funding for 8,500 child care spaces. We have gone ahead with an increase in the minimum wage.

Again, with respect to the special diet allowance, some legitimate concerns have been raised by the Ministry of Finance and by the auditor himself. We think we've got a responsibility to take a look at that, to see what we can do to reform the program to ensure that those who are in fact in need of special support—and there are undoubtedly Ontarians who are in need of special dietary support—are getting that support. We look forward to working with stakeholders and people in the sector to make sure we get this right.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, just this past Tuesday it was announced that the graduation rate in Ontario has increased once again. It's clear that this government has placed great emphasis and value on the education of our young people.

We are aware that it is success in education that makes Ontario more productive and will lead the way to a prosperous future. An educated workforce will provide us with the edge needed to compete in a global economy.

Minister, can you provide more information on this year's graduation rate and our progress since we came to office?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: A very important question indeed, because I think the people of Ontario do want to know that the students who are in our high schools are achieving success more than they were when we came to government.

It was very special that I had the opportunity to be with the Premier and announce that the graduation rate in Ontario's secondary schools has increased some 11 percentage points since we came to government. What that means is fully 52,500 more students are successful in their secondary school experience. We think that this is very good news, particularly because we are focused on building an economy with high-skilled workers. The students who graduate from secondary school will be able to move on to pursue those careers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Minister, there are some who believe that our increased graduation rate is a result of "no fail" in our education system. On this side of the House, we know that teachers work very hard and are dedicated to ensuring that our students are successful. I was disappointed to see the member for Kitchener-Waterloo quoted in her local paper, expressing this exact sentiment.

As a government, we have implemented a number of initiatives that produce positive results in students' achievement. In my own riding, London-Fanshawe, I know that several schools are provided specialized skills training and other student-success initiatives.

Minister, can you tell this House and the people of Ontario what we are doing in our schools to make sure our students are successful?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's very important that I have the opportunity to make very clear why students are being more successful at secondary schools. First of all, the students are working very hard. They are supported by their families. I can say that our teachers are committed to working with students to enable them to be successful. We have, in our learning to 18 strategy, implemented and invested \$1.5 billion since coming to government.

One of those investments is our specialist high skills major program. We now have some 20,000 students who are benefiting in 16 major programs. It's available in 430 secondary schools. The result of that is that it—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Premier. In 2006, \$31 million of taxpayers' money was wasted in what has become known as the Collegate debacle. As part of this scandal, the Ontario Cricket Association was provided a grant of \$1 million, despite requesting only \$150,000.

Maple Leaf Cricket Club in King City received part of this \$1 million. Today, police are investigating over \$100,000 in missing funds and missing cheque stubs at Maple Leaf Cricket Club. Premier, can you assure the taxpayers of Ontario that the Maple Leaf Cricket Club won't become home to your next slush fund debacle?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not familiar with all the details of this police investigation, as I'm sure my honourable colleague would understand, but it sounds like a bit of a stretch, a bit of a reach here on the part of the opposition. I think the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances is to allow the investigation to unfold, and that whatever results are discovered in that then are brought forward in the light of day so that if there is any dimension that somehow relates to the provincial government, we can speak to it at that time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Premier, the Collegate debacle wasn't the first, or the last, of the Liberal scandals that wasted taxpayers' money. The eHealth scandal saw \$1 billion of taxpayers' money squandered. The HST tax collectors are receiving double pay, while hundreds of thousands of Ontarians remain unemployed. Sweetheart deals like those with Samsung, Windsor Energy Centre and the Courtyard Group continue.

As the financial scandal rips through the Maple Leaf Cricket Club, can you tell the people of Ontario what attempts were made to recover the \$1 million provided to the Ontario Cricket Association?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I can't speak to the details, but I can certainly undertake to provide my colleague with more information. What I can say is that an auditor took a look at this and he came up with specific recommendations. We've implemented those recommendations, because we think it's in keeping with the public interest. I think that settles the issue for the time being.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. On Friday, I was in Thunder Bay talking to people about the budget. They were highly skeptical about the Premier's budget, and for good reason. They quickly realized that the help they are being promised on high home heating bills won't even cover the hit that they're going to take as a result of this Premier's HST scheme. Given his sorry seven-year track record of ignoring northern

Ontarians, why should northerners have any faith at all in the Premier now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: By any measure, and the member needs to acknowledge this, this was a tremendous, tremendous budget for northern Ontario. A three-year northern industrial electricity rate program, \$450 million to reduce energy rates by 25% for major industrial users, is tremendous. A \$10-million increase in the northern Ontario heritage fund program that provides thousands of jobs to northerners: I'm sure the member heard about that when she was in Thunder Bay. The \$45 million for project-based skills development for the Ring of Fire opportunity that is going on up there is fantastic, as well as a Ring of Fire coordinator to help get that done. May I say we could go on and on: the highest northern highways budget in history, \$770 million for northern highway construction; we could not be looking for more than that—every year, increases.

This has been tremendous for northern Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I certainly did hear a great deal in northern Ontario, and I'd be happy to share with this member just how cynical the people are about your nasty budget and the fact that you've ignored them for seven years. Northern Ontario families have been hearing this same refrain from this government for years now.

1120

In 2005, the Premier promised \$500 million in forestry money but left half of it sitting in a bank account unused. In 2006, the Premier promised to help soaring pulp and paper electricity costs but has taken four long years to finally—finally—come up with a program, one that we championed for a while now.

While the Premier has been dragging his heels, 45,000 forestry workers lost their jobs, and entire communities have been decimated. That's what I heard in Thunder Bay when I was there on Friday. After so much neglect—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The cynic is the member sitting over there. The fact is that we have flowed \$638 million in terms of forestry incentives in northern Ontario, and it has been well received. Although we are very excited to expand this northern industrial program to the mining sector and to Essar Steel in Sault Ste. Marie, the fact is that forestry, pulp and paper products receive over \$100 million as well, in terms of incentives to reduce their costs. The fact is the northern Ontario heritage fund has made a significant difference: 12,000 jobs created over the last five years by our government, or retained, and another increase with a commitment to go up there.

Four-laning of the highway between Thunder Bay and Nipigon is something we've worked on for a long time. That construction begins this summer with a commitment to keep going.

The fact is, this is a great budget for northern Ontario. Our Open Ontario plan supports the Ring of Fire development, and we could not be more excited. We look forward to moving forward with some—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontarians recognize that a well-educated workforce is key to a prosperous society. Since 2005, we have seen a steady increase in enrolment at post-secondary institutions. More and more people are choosing a post-secondary education and recognizing that Ontario's institutions are among the best in the world. In my community, the University of Guelph is attracting students from across this province and from around the world. Recent capital investments in Guelph are ensuring they have room to accommodate new students.

How are we going to help the University of Guelph and other Ontario universities and colleges meet our goal of having the best-educated workforce in the world?

Hon. John Milloy: I think everyone should be very proud of the progress that we've made over the past six years in terms of enhancing Ontario's post-secondary education system. We now have 120,000 more students in Ontario's colleges and universities than when we took office. Last week's budget outlined funding for a further 20,000 students this fall, and we will be providing our colleges and universities with \$310 million to help them with the cost of welcoming these 20,000 students. At the same time, recognizing the pressure that our colleges and universities were under in 2009-10 with growing enrolment, we also provided them with \$155 million to deal with those immediate pressures. Together, a substantial investment in the future—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I want to tell the minister that the administration at the University of Guelph has related to me that they were extremely appreciative of those initiatives in last week's budget. There was a real focus in last week's budget on post-secondary education opening Ontario to new ideas and leading to new economic growth and jobs. We must do everything we can to prepare our young people with the skills and training they need to compete in our global market.

But, Minister, I've also heard from workers in Guelph, who have been hit hard by the economic downturn, that they need new skills to find a different career path in our new knowledge-based economy. Although the increases to operating grants are important, I've heard from stakeholders that we need some policy changes to create more flexible pathways for student learning. Minister, what is our government doing to keep—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for the question. I'd just like to highlight the Second Career program, which has welcomed close to 28,000 laid-off workers into the province's college and private career college system. The budget outlined funding and support to accept an additional 30,000 individuals into the system, bringing it close to 60,000 people who will benefit from these re-training opportunities.

At the same time, on the policy front the budget outlined ambitious plans in terms of international students coming to our area, in terms of online institutions and also our efforts to address the very important issue of credit transfer, the ability of students in our college and university system to move from one system to the other and receive credit for the learning that they've undertaken.

All of these are going to further enhance what is one of the best post-secondary—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, when your government passed the Endangered Species Act under another minister, you promised you would use the Crown Forest Sustainability Act as the regulatory tool when establishing habitat protection zones. Your government broke that promise.

Will you, as the new minister, attempt to re-establish credibility with the forestry industry by demonstrating good faith and doing what you said you would do in the first place: use the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and stop taking orders from special interests in Toronto and Brampton?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: This is a very important issue and it's something that I have been working on in the first two months of my mandate. Certainly the Endangered Species Act is a cornerstone of our government's mandate in the next couple of years. It makes Ontario a North American leader, and part of being a North American leader is consulting.

We've worked very hard with the forestry sector and our environmentalists. We've consulted all of the people in the north, and we continue to consult with them. I intend to be visiting the north in the next couple of months to ask them again how the Endangered Species Act can work better with their communities and to make sure that we find a balance on the legislation and economic development that happens in the north. Certainly it's something I'm very seized with, and we'll try and do more consultation with the forestry sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: In fact, you haven't spoken very much with the industry. The permitting system that you have decided to work with is not working and will never work.

Forestry operators in my riding are among the most committed when it comes to protecting our natural resources. They have made it clear that your permitting system is just a fancy way of saying no. Your regulations are not based on science, rather political science. This industry is in crisis. Is it not time for you to stand up for what is right, not just for what you believe is in your best political interest? Please, stand up and do what is right for this industry and all of Ontario.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I am pleased to stand up to defend the Endangered Species Act. Certainly our government voted in favour of it. It's my understanding you did not, so it's ironic that you would come back to us to challenge our position.

I've met with the forestry sector. I've met with people who care about the caribou. I've met with, and certainly intend to meet more with First Nations. We have a lot of stakeholders. This is too important an issue. We need to get it right. It's important that we meet with the forestry sector, and they're actually a very good resource. The plan they put together in their forest management plan is so good that there are a lot of components to the forest management act now that will help the Endangered Species Act. We intend to continue to work with them. They're great partners and stewards of the land.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Thursday's budget revealed that, next year, Ontario hospitals are going to be receiving less than the rate of inflation. They will be receiving a 1.5% increase to their base funding, which is about half of what hospital inflation is. It averages about 3%. Can the Premier tell Ontarians how he expects hospitals to maintain services without adequate funding?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to have an opportunity to reply to this question.

Hospital funding in Ontario has increased from \$10.9 billion in 2003-04 to \$16.3 billion. That's almost a 50% increase. We are increasing funding for hospitals again this year. There will be a base increase of 1.5% but, overall, our funding to hospitals will continue to increase at well above the rate of inflation. We have budgeted a 4.7% increase in hospital funding.

The difference between 1.5% and 4.7%—and I do understand that this takes a little thinking about. I'll be happy to talk about that in the supplementary.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G  linas: In the last month, I have heard from countless residents of rural and northern Ontario as I travelled with the Ontario Health Coalition on their rural and northern tour. Residents in Welland, Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Cobourg, Picton, St. Joseph Island, Desbarats and Thessalon are all saying the same thing: They are losing their health care services locally. It

seems very clear how hospitals are balancing their books. They are doing it on the backs of smaller northern and rural hospitals.

Is the minister intent on balancing her books by gutting small northern and rural hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Like the member opposite, we're very committed to continuing to improve health care for people right across the province, and that includes in the rural and northern parts of this great province.

We have established a panel, the northern and rural panel. That report is close to being ready to be released. I'm very excited about some of the opportunities that are available to us, some of the new tools that we have, including tools like telehealth.

Our commitment to all Ontarians is as strong as could be.

TOURISM AND CULTURE

Mr. Glen R. Murray: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. Tourism generates \$23 billion of our GDP, while culture accounts for nearly \$20 billion. As such, bringing the two ministries together is an important step in recognizing the potential growth and prosperity they can provide to Ontario. We know that these two industries are significant economic drivers and that to support the economy we need to grow them and move forward. We need to extend our efforts in working together. As a result, we will see all of Ontario benefit.

Minister, how will these two industries strengthen their partnership to further support the growth of Ontario's cultural attractions?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Toronto Centre for his question.

Tourism and culture are two vital industries in Ontario. They are the economic driver for our economy. They are complementary to each other and they are most effective when they function as one.

I'll give you an example. The tourism industry greatly benefits from the investments we have made in attractions such as the AGO and the ROM. We have increased annual funding for the ROM by \$9 million, and \$10 million for the AGO. Such investments are working. ROM's attendance is on the rise, and just last week it celebrated its one millionth visitor for the current fiscal year.

We will continue to move forward to strengthen our cultural and tourism industries.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer.

A strong partnership is vital for growth. To go further, the two industries also need to work together to include Ontario's greatest asset—our diversity. It is an inherent part of who we are in Ontario, and it is also an important market. It brings significant benefits to all of us here in Ontario. We have attractive world-class facilities, collections and programs, but we need to go further to deliver new and dynamic programming that will be attractive to our whole population.

Again, what steps will the minister take to ensure that these cultural attractions are maximizing the diversity that the greater Toronto area offers?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member again for the question.

Diversity is a piece of Ontario and it is evident in our cultural attractions, whether it be the South Asian art gallery, the terracotta warriors from China or the Dead Sea scrolls. Cultural attractions like the ROM embody diversity as much as Ontario does. For a bright, vibrant future, it's important to understand and reflect on the past. Such history strengthens our knowledge about one another and Ontario's diversity.

We are fortunate to have vibrant cultural attractions that bring so much of the world to Ontario. There is always more that we can do. I believe our cultural attractions have the right vision and dedication to move us forward.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Premier, a question for clarification. During the throne speech, it was stated by the Lieutenant Governor, "That's why, starting this fall, full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds will begin at schools across our province. This is the first program of its kind in North America."

Then, in a response to a point of order last Thursday, your House leader stated, "A number of district school boards in Ontario already offer full-day kindergarten programs—a number of our French boards, in particular."

Premier, who made the error: the Lieutenant Governor or your House leader?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Our government is committed to implementing full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. I know that is something the member opposite and his leader call a "frill."

We are committed to building on the investments that we've made in elementary school, in this particular case. It is, as our House leader has indicated, a reality in some of our elementary schools in the province of Ontario, where parents have the option of having their children enrolled for a full day, every day. The commitment of our government is to ensure that all children who are four and five years old have the opportunity for full-day learning when our program is fully implemented. That is the reality. We do have full-day kindergarten in place in some locations—

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: The question is not so much of the program, it's the form in which it's moving forward. I'll quote again. According to the Lieutenant Governor, "That's why, starting this fall, full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds will begin at schools across our province. This is the first program of its kind in North America."

The House leader said we had it already, and the Lieutenant Governor says we're going to bring this forward. Which is it, Minister? It's in place or it's not in

place. Nobody is questioning if there is a program or the contents of the program by which the statements were made.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think what people in the province of Ontario, particularly parents, want to know about is the commitment of this government to provide full-day learning for all students in the province of Ontario. That is, in fact, the commitment that we have made. We have said to the people that we believe in the value of investing in full-day learning for all students in the province. We are beginning that process this fall, and it will be fully implemented by 2015-16.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been asking for questions on the budget, and as soon as this government brings in a budget, we'll be asking questions—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you very much. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANADA-CUBA RELATIONS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I rise in the House today to recognize two Cuban representatives, Teresita de Jesús Vicente Sotolongo, ambassador of Cuba in Canada, and Jorge Soberón, Cuban Consul General in Toronto, on the special occasion of the 65th anniversary of Canada-Cuban bilateral diplomatic relations.

Canada has always enjoyed consistently cordial relations with Cuba. Cuba was the first country in the Caribbean selected by Canada for a diplomatic mission, and together with Mexico we were the only ones to maintain continuous diplomatic relations following the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Our official diplomatic relations were established in 1945, but Canada-Cuba relations can actually be traced back to the 18th century when the Atlantic provinces began trading codfish for rum and sugar.

Today, the island continues to be one of the top travel destinations for Canadians. In fact, nearly 35% of all visitors to Cuba are Canadians.

Trade is always increasing and is now estimated at about \$1.66 billion.

One of the most successful Canadian-inspired events is the annual Terry Fox run in Cuba, now the largest in the world outside of Canada.

Knowledge of Canada's history, geography, policies and programs is also promoted through Canadian studies centres located in six universities across Cuba.

Canada supports a future for Cuba that fully embraces the fundamental values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

I'm sure all of you will join me in saying, "Viva Cuba," and may we enjoy many more years of prosperous relations with our Cuban friends.

OLYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I want to take us back about a month and a half or so to those great, outstanding 2010 Vancouver Olympics. I want to pay tribute, as many have, to participants in those Olympic Games.

One that you might not know of but one that was very important is a gentleman from Essex, Ontario, in my riding, by the name of Dan O'Halloran. Those who follow hockey will know that Dan O'Halloran is a 15-year veteran referee in the NHL. Dan was refereeing that game where we all stopped and our hearts stopped for 24 seconds, and then it went on and we won the game. Just recognizing the officials, I think, is important because Dan was instrumental in keeping that game to be one of the great games in history, I'm sure. Congratulations to Dan.

I also want to mention a young lady who played on the women's championship gold medal team for the second gold medal, Meghan Agosta. She comes from the little hamlet of Ruthven in the town of Kingsville in my riding. She scored nine goals and six assists during the Olympic Games, and she was the most valuable player. I want to send out personal congratulations and those from her friends in our riding of Essex on a great games, Meghan. Congratulations. We love you and we support you. You are a great athlete.

RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

Mr. John O'Toole: Over a month ago, I was pleased to welcome constituent Roland Goreski to the Legislature, along with members of the Ontario Recreational Vehicle Dealers Association and the Ontario Private Campground Association. At that time, MPPs were briefed and advised that the RV industry needs the help of this government to resolve conflicting rules about towing recreational vehicles. These conflicts have to do with whether someone driving a vehicle with a trailer needs a G or an A licence.

The RV industry is also seeking a change in the way the vehicle identification number, VIN, on motorized vehicles is displayed and registered. They're often registered on the chassis versus the coach VIN. It's an interesting challenge.

The Ontario Recreational Vehicle Dealers Association has more than 225 members in Ontario. The RV industry contributes about half a billion dollars to the Ontario economy every year. Frankly, I'm disappointed to learn that the industry has been disappointed, as they have been waiting since 2005 to resolve these concerns. This is a delay of four years.

This government's inaction means a lack of sales because of consumers' hesitation in purchasing RVs, and I urge the Ministry of Transportation to end this delay immediately. Please remove these issues and help the industry build a stronger Ontario.

There are other issues with the campground association as well, and I'd urge the government to work with

them. Tourism is very important to Ontario; indeed, to my riding.

HOCKEY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: During hockey season, the scene is always the same in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex: lots of families supporting their youngsters at the local hockey arena; the walls of all the areas are adorned with banners of past victories and championships; all levels of hockey are represented, both boys and girls; and the boards around the ice pads are covered with ads from local businesses and service clubs, all financially supporting the great Canadian sport. So it was in Mount Brydges last Friday night, as the Mount Brydges Cougars skated out to meet the Port Colborne Sailors in the final game of the Novice A OMHA West B divisional championships.

The groups and the crowds in the bleachers had swelled to include not only parents but grandparents, aunts, uncles and family friends. The game itself moved along quickly, and it was obvious that these young people had matured greatly since the beginning of the season. Great sportsmanship was the order of the evening, as evidenced by the supporters. All cheered enthusiastically for both sides. Coach Brian Griffiths commented on the hospitality that the Mount Brydges team had enjoyed while in Port Colborne.

I want to thank the coaches and trainers who, by their example, are teaching our children both the skills and the etiquette of this great sport. Along with Coach Griffiths is coach Terry Madill, trainers Roy Ireland and Peter Bauer. And yes, Peter's son also plays on the team, and his name is Johnny Bauer.

Mount Brydges' novice team are now the OMHA champs, but it would be fair to say that both sides are winners because of the great supporters and the coaches they have.

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: People in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke are angered and incensed that the Premier and the Liberal government would decide that they are going to show such disrespect for taxpayers' money—sticking to their DNA—that they would rather spend it than defend it and fork out \$25 million to HST tax collectors in a severance package for jobs they're not losing. It goes completely against the spirit of any belief of what severance is. Severance is something that is there to pad the difficulties faced in the transition between one source of employment and another. It is not a bonus.

I know that the Premier wants to talk about honouring agreements. This is the same Premier who stood up in front of television cameras and signed the taxpayers' protection pledge with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation before being elected Premier in 2003 and immediately broke that promise on being elected. So he cannot play that game with us.

People know that severance is there to protect people when they lose their jobs, not to be a bonus when they don't lose them. I'm going to say to the folks across the way that I'd like to see how you try to sell this piece of junk to your constituents in all your ridings, and try to convince them that \$25 million of their money being put into the HST tax collectors' pockets is good public policy. Shame on you, every one of you, if—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Kenora—Rainy River.

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HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton: Over the last couple of days, members of the government have been patting themselves on the back in northern Ontario because they believe that they are implementing a reduced industrial hydro rate. I'm here today to ensure that people know what is actually going on.

First, what the government announced is a temporary measure that will last for only three years. Anybody who operates a paper mill or a pulp mill, or, as Xstrata does, a metallurgical facility, knows that this is not going to help them. Three years from now, when this proposed industrial hydro rate ends, their hydro bills will be higher than ever. So temporary measures will not work.

Second, this is an issue which has been growing since 2005. When the government introduced Bill 100, which made it clear it was going to drive industrial hydro rates through the roof, paper mills and pulp mills came here and said, "Don't do this. This will force us to close."

If the government had implemented this in 2005 or 2006, it might have made a difference, but now it is too little, too late. Hydro bills have already gone up by 40% or 50%, and proposing to freeze them where they are now is simply not good enough. It will not restore mill jobs that have been lost and destroyed in communities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

The member from Don Valley East on a point of order.

Mr. David Caplan: Speaker, would it be a point of order if I asked the House to welcome the students from Victoria Park secondary school who are in the gallery here today?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, it's not a point of order, but we would like to welcome the students today.

KRAFT HOCKEYVILLE 2010

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I rise today to extend my most sincere congratulations to the town of Dundas in my riding for qualifying for the top five in Kraft Canada and CBC's Hockeyville 2010 contest.

The latest hockey cut was this past Saturday, and I'm thrilled that Dundas sailed through and is now the only Ontario town heading for the big win. The top prize for the contest includes hosting an NHL pre-season game in

the local community, a CBC Hockey Night in Canada broadcast and \$100,000 in arena upgrades from Kraft.

There's nothing like hockey to bring out the community spirit in Canadians. The J.L. Grightmire Market Street Arena in Dundas is the perfect venue, and you'll find no greater hockey spirit than in the residents of Dundas.

Dundas is indeed Hockeyville, as exemplified by the Dundas Real McCoys, who last Friday evening were crowned major league hockey's senior AAA champions. Congratulations to Donnie Robertson and the entire team. Congratulations also to Barry Forth and his entire Gotta Be Dundas team.

Hockeyville voting is now on and will go to Wednesday. People can vote by email, text message or on a 1-866 number. That number is 1-866-533-8066, and I urge all members of the Legislative Assembly to get behind this great Ontario town. I'll be sending a memo out with voting instructions later this afternoon.

CANADA-CUBA RELATIONS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This morning I woke up to the rhythm and sounds of Cuban music. I thought, "How appropriate," because today, as you all know, we are celebrating the 65th anniversary of Cuba-Canada bilateral and trade relations.

What a day it really is. As you know, the interest in Cuba is great, even in this Legislature. When I called the first meeting of the Canada-Cuba parliamentary association, there were 22 members of provincial Parliament who showed some interest in the country called Cuba. How tremendous. Did you know that this year, Cuba is expecting one million Canadians to visit that island?

As we celebrate the 65th anniversary today, we know that while these diplomatic relations were formally established in the year 1945, it is not a coincidence that on such an early date as 1903, a commercial office of the Republic of Cuba was established in Nova Scotia to diversify the existing trade of codfish for Cuban rum and sugar. In the course of the years, those initial exchanges were extended from the Maritimes all along the huge Canadian territory. Nowadays, the province of Ontario has become the venue of most of the companies and entrepreneurs currently involved in business in Cuba. So I say to Cuba and Canada: Viva Cuba and viva Canada.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm proud to support our government's innovative vision on the province that was outlined in last week's budget and previously the throne speech.

Our government is moving forward with its five-year plan to open Ontario to new jobs and growth while outlining measures to help eliminate the deficit caused by the global recession.

Expanding on initiatives announced recently, the budget is proposing investments that will help 20,000

more students to go to college and university this September—that will be helpful to my riding—and create jobs and boost economic growth in northern Ontario.

Open Ontario builds on progress made over the past six years to support job creation and enhance the programs and services, including education, health care and skills training, that Ontarians value.

The 2010 budget includes measures to manage expenditures, including compensation restraint and making government programs more efficient. It lays out a realistic and responsible plan to cut the deficit in half in five years and eliminate it in eight.

Our Open Ontario plan will create new opportunities for jobs and economic growth, especially in the Green Energy Act. The 2010 budget moves that plan forward and protects the progress Ontarians have made in our schools and hospitals as we eliminate the deficit caused by that global recession.

One of the other points that needs to be made clearly here is that most fair-minded people understand the difficulties that all of us have gone through through the global recession, and we have a plan to recover.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Bisson assumes ballot item 15, Ms. Horwath assumes ballot item 22, Ms. DiNovo assumes ballot item 25 and Mr. Kormos assumes ballot item 75.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 63(c), the supplementary estimates, 2009-10, of the Ministry of Finance before the Standing Committee on Estimates are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported and received by the House.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report on the agency review of the Ontario Securities Commission from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, it is a pleasure to table this report on our review of an important agency of the province, the Ontario Securities Commission.

In the minds of most Ontarians, the commission is the public's guardian in the capital markets. In light of recent events, we believe it would be useful for the commission to reassess the way in which it exercises its public interest jurisdictions.

Among other subjects dealt with, our committee's recommendations include: creation of a dedicated capital markets crime unit; establishment by the Ministry of Finance of an industry-funded compensation fund; establishment by the OSC of an investor advisory body; creation of an investor representative on the OSC's board of directors; and launching of a formal review of democracy in corporate governance in Ontario.

Finally, we note that Ontario, as the Canadian jurisdiction with the largest capital market and the most influential securities regulator, has long supported the concept of a national regulator.

We recommend that the OSC and the province continue to work with other levels of government, regulators and stakeholders towards the implementation of a national securities regulator.

Our committee expresses great appreciation to the officials and staff of the Ontario Securities Commission and to all witnesses who appeared before us during our public hearings or who made written submissions.

I would like to thank all committee members for their contributions throughout the course of the review process, as well as legislative staff Douglas Arnott, the clerk of the committee, and Andrew McNaught, the research officer.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hardeman has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPLY ACT, 2010

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2010

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010 / Projet de loi 17, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2010.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I have no statement at this time, Mr. Speaker.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT
(LOCAL DEMOCRACY
AND ACCOUNTABILITY), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS (DÉMOCRATIE
ET RESPONSABILISATION LOCALES)

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide for the election of the head and the members of upper-tier municipal councils / Projet de loi 18, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités afin de prévoir l'élection du président et des membres du conseil des municipalités de palier supérieur.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. David Caplan: I have a very short statement. I was surprised to discover this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Read the explanatory note, please.

Mr. David Caplan: Okay. The Municipal Act, 2001, shall be amended, if this bill is passed, to provide that the head of any upper-tier council and the members of any upper-tier council shall be elected. I hope to have the support of all members of this House.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion respecting the consideration of concurrence in supply.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, the order for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance, supplementaries only, and order G17, second reading of Bill 17, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010, shall be called concurrently; and

That, when such orders are called, they shall be considered concurrently in a single debate; and

That two hours be allotted to the debate, divided equally among the recognized parties, at the end of which time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the order for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance and to dispose of all remaining stages of Bill 17; and

That any required divisions on the order for concurrence in supply or on the motion for second reading of Bill 17 shall be deferred to deferred votes, such votes to be taken in succession with one five-minute bell.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members have heard the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

AIDE FINANCIÈRE AUX ÉTUDIANTS

Hon. John Milloy: Ontario offers one of the most generous financial student assistance programs in Canada. Over the last five years, our government has invested \$1.5 billion in financial support for students. Today, the government is moving forward with a plan to expand student aid even further and to modernize the Ontario student assistance program to meet the needs of today's students.

Cela fait partie de notre plan Ontario ouvert sur le monde, pour créer de nouvelles occasions d'emplois et de croissance. Nous voulons que les étudiants se concentrent sur leurs études et non pas sur la façon dont ils vont payer leurs provisions ou leur loyer.

So we're allowing students to keep more of the money they earn from part-time jobs while they are in school by boosting weekly loan maximums and doubling the student income exemption.

We're also going to provide students with more help in repaying their Ontario student loans by covering interest on those loans for the first six months after they graduate, and we will join the federal repayment assistance program.

Under our program, no graduate will be asked to pay more than 20% of their family income toward their loans, and after 15 years, any remaining student loan debt will be forgiven. To help married students, we are reducing by 10% the share of income that spouses are required to contribute to their partner's education.

We are also doubling the OSAP vehicle exemption for students who are married or have dependent children. This means that vehicles worth up to \$10,000 will not affect students' OSAP assessments.

The improvements also include more financial assistance for books, supplies and equipment. We are also creating 1,000 new scholarships for graduate students and a new \$500 grant for part-time students.

When it comes to tuition, our government wants to do whatever it can to make sure it remains as affordable as possible for students. This is why we are going to continue to limit tuition fee increases to an average of 5% a year for the next two years, continuing the framework that has been in place for the past three years. We are also requiring colleges and universities to contribute 10% of the additional revenue from any tuition increases to

bursaries and other student assistance programs that provide financial aid to students most in need.

The changes we are making to OSAP are significant and will make a real difference in the lives of Ontario's students. The majority of these changes are taking place this fiscal year. We are improving student aid to help more students attend college and university.

Et comme un plus grand nombre d'Ontariens poursuivent des études postsecondaires, nous créons davantage d'occasions d'emploi et de croissance afin que nous soyons concurrentiels sur le marché mondial.

Grâce à des études supérieures, ils pourront atteindre leur plein potentiel et nous aider à ouvrir l'Ontario sur le monde et sur les marchés mondiaux, et à assurer notre prospérité future.

After all, today's students are the builders, dreamers and innovators who will lead Ontario into the future. They will help us build a stronger Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries? Responses?

Mr. Jim Wilson: In response to the minister's announcement today, I can't see how any student in this province could see today's announcement by the minister as good news.

The minister just said he is going to do two things for Ontario's students: He's allowing them to take on more debt, and he's hiking tuition fees by 10% over the next two years. How anyone can think this is good news, or a good-news story for students, is beyond me.

It's painful how obvious this scheme is—and I can't be clearer—to the students watching. The Liberals are going to raise student tuition, and they're going to allow students to mortgage their future even further to pay for the Liberal tuition hikes.

Ontario already has the highest tuition in Canada, and now the Liberals are announcing that they're going to hike it even higher, despite the fact that Premier McGuinty, in 2003 and 2007, said he would raise tuition so that we would be in the middle of the pack in Canada, and not continue to have the highest tuition in Canada.

Both the Canadian Federation of Students and the Ontario undergraduate student association have told me, and publicly said, that had we stuck to the Mike Harris-Ernie Eves tuition plan, tuitions would be significantly lower today than they are under the Liberal government. Since the start of the Reaching Higher plan, the Liberals have hiked tuition by 5% year after year, and now they're announcing that they're going to keep on raising it.

OSAP loans aren't free money. It's student debt that students have to repay with significant interest. Increasing weekly loan limits from \$140 to \$150 simply means that students are going to take on \$10 more debt each week. Doubling the exemption on in-study income from \$50 to \$103 per week just means that students are going to take on another \$53 in debt each week. Tying the maximum assessment for textbooks and supplies to the rate of inflation means that student debt for textbooks will rise again and again at the rate of inflation.

This isn't a generous plan for students. The Liberals have no option than to do this, because if they're going to raise your tuition by 10% over the next two years, they obviously have to adjust the rules and allow you to take on more debt, as announced today.

This isn't an announcement about lower tuition fees or lower student debt; it's exactly the opposite. And only a Liberal government would have the gall to say that it's good news for students. It's paying more to get less from the Ontario Liberals.

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Ontario class sizes, at the post-secondary level, are already the highest in Canada. Because of the quadruple cohort this year of students entering the system, class sizes are about to get even bigger. We've got the unemployed entering, we've got international students—an announcement by the Premier that he wants more international students—we've got people in the Second Career program and the regular high school grads. We haven't seen this sort of pressure on the system in over 30 years.

What do larger class sizes mean? Well, it brings the quality of education down. With this hike in tuition, do students get more student-faculty engagement? No. They're actually going to get less. The student-to-faculty ratio at comparable schools in the United States is 13.7 to one; in Ontario, it's 22.3 students to one faculty member. This affects quality.

According to the National Survey of Student Engagement, when it comes to enriching educational experiences, active and collaborative learning, and student-to-faculty interactions, our students are less positive about their experiences. In these three factors, our students are in the bottom third of the ratings in North America. As Roger Martin's task force on competitiveness, productivity and economic progress said, "It is possible that in gradually increasing student-teacher ratio over time, we have failed to recognize the impact on the student experience. Parents of today's university students, who themselves attended an Ontario university a generation ago, probably would not recognize the crowded lecture halls experienced by their children."

I'll add one further point. To those students dismayed by today's announcements, let me tell you, it doesn't have to be this way. Through freedom of information, we know that the Higher Education Quality Council has been squandering about \$8 million. This is a council that the Liberals brought back into existence. There was no call for it in my 20 years. It's \$8 million. They've been spending wildly on hospitality: on meals, on eating their choice—rather than Kraft dinner or hot dogs, as students do. Their choice at the council seems to be to eat at the Westin Harbour Castle or the Fairmont Royal York hotel, rather than living in a basement apartment or a house with eight roommates like many students do. Just remember that we've discovered the Liberals' Higher Education Quality Council is staying at the Sutton Place and in luxury condominiums.

So I say to the students today, this isn't a good-news announcement. The Liberals promised a lot more, and

they're not delivering on the promises they made to the students of the province of Ontario.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to continue with the comments made by the member from Simcoe-Grey, and also to deflate the enthusiasm of the minister, because he's always so proud of the very little he does, but he continues with the tradition of helping Ontario students by giving with one hand and taking with the other. That's what he does and his government does on a regular basis.

A little history: Here's the problem of this government. We are number 10—last, dead last—in the country in per capita funding. We have been impoverished by this government and others before them in terms of what—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to leave the Tories alone for a while, because I've got so much time to waste with the Liberals—you're quite right. You're quite right. Why go back?

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Going back to the NDP, when students paid 23% of their own way for education—today, under the Liberals, it's 45% and rising every year. Let's go back to the NDP, Mr. Milloy, and see where we are at—the highest student debt in the country, literally. The average debt is \$23,000 a year. This is if you're in the humanities program. If you're in law, medicine or engineering, you're paying anywhere from \$15,000 to \$20,000 on tuition fees alone, let alone having to go from one city to another and having to pay rent; let alone having to pay for the books that Mr. Milloy is going to help out with, with a couple of extra bucks, he claims. You have impoverished students unlike never before. What are you proud of? I don't get it.

Hon. John Milloy: One hundred and forty thousand more.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: One hundred and forty thousand more what? One hundred and forty thousand more what, Milloy? There is no record here to be proud of. That's my point. The quality of our post-secondary education system has been on the decline for a long time.

We are hiring in our colleges and universities, Mr. Milloy, and you know—you must know—we're hiring more and more part-time professors than ever before. We used to have full-time professors who had the time to be able to talk to students. They no longer have the time. Do you know why, Milloy? Because most of your hirees are part-time contract workers. They go from one job to the other. They're not there to be able to work with students anymore. Colleges and universities keep hiring on a part-time basis to make ends meet. Universities used to invest a couple of dollars, and they've gone bust in the last year. They've got no more money to spare, assuming they had some money to spare. But there's none left. The cupboards are dry.

We are dead last in per capita funding—dead last. Student debt load is increasing by the year. Tuition fees under his watch have been going up for the last four years, 5% every year—cumulative, like 5% one year, and

you add another 5% on top. Do you get my point? It's 20% accumulated on itself. Then the government says, "Oh, but"—wait for this—"we're capping tuition fees"—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, at 5%.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —"at 5%." Thanks a lot, Minister Milloy. How does that help students, with a 5% cap at a time when the economy has gone bust and students haven't been working? They're not looking forward to great jobs because so many are unemployed; 12% of students are unemployed. What do they have to look forward to except paying more and more debt from now to the end of their lives? That's what you're leaving them; that's the legacy you're leaving them.

And by the way, thank you, Mr. Milloy, for the few extra dollars you're giving to the part-time students. Part-time students have access to nothing. Part-time students who take three courses have, under his watch, been paying the full load of tuition fees, and now he says, "But we're going to give them a few extra dollars." What does it say here? "Introducing a new grant for part-time students." Thanks a lot, Minister Milloy, for the little help. They've got no money. They get what? Part-time students get whacked by paying full-time fees, and lo and behold, he's going to help them by introducing a new grant so they'll be able to get a few pennies to help them out a little bit. Thank you very much.

There is very little that is good or positive in this announcement. You have become the poor province of Canada, a province that used to be so wealthy and so proud. You have nothing any longer to be able to leave—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe-Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France G  linas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under" certain "conditions ...; and

"Whereas by October 2009, insured PET scans will be performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital"—now on one site—"its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Snigdha—I don't think I got the name right.

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OSTOMY SUPPLIES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are thousands of citizens, young and old, living with an ostomy across Ontario, many of whom are on a fixed income; and

"Whereas an ostomy ... always improves the quality of life for the patient by correcting the previous serious or debilitating condition; and

"Whereas the assistive devices program currently only provides a \$600 grant annually for ostomy supplies for each ostomy a patient has, which in most cases is merely a third of the annual costs; and

"Whereas the assistive devices program currently will not cover supplies for persons with a temporary ostomy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario to increase funding to those on a fixed income who must purchase ostomy supplies in order to survive."

There are 3,246 signatures, and I affix my signature as well.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Michael Prue: I've received a petition from the good people of Beaches-East York that reads as follows:

"Whereas, in the 2006 budget, the McGuinty government allocated \$63.5 million for child care for each of the

next four years. Each year since, \$63.5 million went to support our vital child care services;

"Whereas, if the province does not continue this funding in the 2010 provincial budget, municipalities will have no option but to make dramatic cuts to child care subsidies, destabilizing the entire system;

"Therefore, be it resolved that in the 2010 budget we call on Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan to:

"(1) Ensure the province provides sufficient funding to maintain existing levels of child care service, and recognize cost-of-living and other legitimate increases in operating costs; and

"(2) Provide all necessary tools to support the transition to an early learning program, including base funding for child care programs to support operations and wages comparable to the full-day learning program, in order to ensure the child care system remains stable and sustainable."

I am in agreement and will affix my signature thereto.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's plan to blend the PST with the GST into one 13% harmonized sales tax"—otherwise known as the HST—"represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"This new tax, which we are calling the DST ... will raise the cost of a long list of goods and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax, including"—but not excepting—"electricity; home heating oil and gas at the pump; haircuts; newspapers, magazines; Internet and cable; home renovations; heating; air-conditioning repairs; accounting, legal and real estate fees; condo fees; new home sales;" also, rent may go up—"minor hockey registration fees will increase; and green fees and gym fees...;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government not impose this new tax on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I agree with this and I affix my signature.

CHILD CARE

M^{me} France G  linas: I have this petition from the people of Toronto, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas, in the 2006 budget, the McGuinty government allocated \$63.5 million for child care for each of the next four years. Each year since, \$63.5 million went to support our vital child care services;

"Whereas, if the province" of Ontario "does not continue this funding in the 2010 provincial budget, municipalities will have no option but to make dramatic cuts to child care subsidies, destabilizing the entire system..."

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) Ensure the province provides sufficient funding to maintain existing levels of child care service, and recognize cost-of-living and other legitimate increases in operating costs; and

“(2) Provide all necessary tools to support the transition to an early learning program, including base funding for child care programs to support operations and wages comparable to the full-day learning program, in order to ensure the child care system remains stable and sustainable.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks' table with page George.

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakubuski: I table this petition on behalf of my colleague from Simcoe–Grey, although it could apply to everywhere across this great province.

“Whereas the hard-working residents in Simcoe–Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day;” and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air-conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and send it to the table with Erin.

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

“Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational requirements and is well known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that ‘Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we’re not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them’; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn’t found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area.”

I want to thank Marian Curry from Elmvale for sending this petition to me, and I will sign it.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition that I would like to read to the Legislature. It concerns an issue that my colleague the member for Halton has raised in the House on many occasions. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario, through the Ontario Energy Board, has selected a location for a gas-fired electrical generating power station within three kilometres of 16 schools and more than 11,000 homes; and

“Whereas the Oakville-Clarkson airshed is already one of the most polluted in Canada; and

“Whereas no independent environmental assessment has been completed for this proposed building location; and

“Whereas Ontario has experienced a significant reduction in demand for electrical power; and

“Whereas a recent accident at a power plant in Connecticut demonstrated the dangers that nearby residents face;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to immediately rescind the existing plan to build a power plant at or near the current planned location on lands owned by the Ford Motor Co. on Royal Windsor Drive in Oakville and initiate a complete review of area power needs and potential building sites, including environmental assessments and a realistic assessment of required danger zone buffer areas.”

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s plan to blend the PST with the GST into one 13% harmonized sales tax (HST) represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"This new tax, which we are calling the DST ... will raise the cost of a long list of goods and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax, including: electricity; home heating oil and gas at the pump; haircuts; magazines; Internet; home renovations; heating; air-conditioning repairs; accounting, legal and real estate fees; condo fees; new home sales ...; minor hockey registration fees ...; and green fees and gym fees will also be taxed;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government not impose this new tax on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I certainly agree with it, will affix my signature and give it to page Snigdha.

TAXATION

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: "Whereas the hard-working residents of Carleton-Mississippi Mills do not want a harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air-conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning....;"

It goes on and on, so I'll cut it short, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of HST on a lot of things that will affect the province's "seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers" and cancel the HST.

I agree with that.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas several paramedics in Simcoe county had their pensions affected when paramedic services were transferred to the county of Simcoe, as their pensions were not transferred with them from HOOPP and OPTrust to OMERS, meaning they will receive significantly reduced pensions because their transfer did not recognize their years of continuous service; and

"Whereas when these paramedics started with their new employer, the county of Simcoe, their past pensionable years were not recognized because of existing pension legislation; and

"Whereas the government's own Expert Commission on Pensions has recommended that the government move swiftly to address this issue; and

"Whereas the government should recognize this issue as a technicality and not penalize hard-working paramedics;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier McGuinty support Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's resolution that calls upon the government to address this issue immediately and ensure that any legislation or regulation allows paramedics in Simcoe county who were affected by the divestment of paramedic services in the 1990s and beyond to transfer their pensions from HOOPP and OPTrust to OMERS."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2010 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 25, 2010, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I would like to move the following: That the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on March 22, 2010, "that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words following "that this House" and adding thereto the following:

"Supports the principle that if you do not lose your job, you do not get severance; and

"Cannot support Premier Dalton McGuinty's decision to pay six-month severance packages, worth as much as \$45,000 each, to more than 1,250 HST tax collectors who will transfer to the federal government without losing a day of work; and

"Strongly opposes this government for failing to address any uncertainty in the provisions the McGuinty Liberals negotiated and ratified in the collective bargaining agreements it concluded in 2006 and 2009; the comprehensive integrated tax coordination agreement; the Ontario Tax Plan for More Jobs and Growth Act, 2009; and the human resource agreement for the transfer of staff from the province of Ontario to the Canada Revenue Agency, resulting in severance payments to HST tax collectors who will transfer to the federal government without losing a day of work; and

"Failing to enact measures in the budget that amend the Ontario Tax Plan for More Jobs and Growth Act, 2009, including schedule R, section 50 and the comprehensive integrated tax coordination agreement, including part XI and Annex C, ratified and confirmed thereto;

"Concludes that if the McGuinty Liberal government is incapable of protecting the interests of Ontario families

when it comes to so-called severance payments to HST tax collectors, then it cannot be trusted with the stewardship of the provincial finances.”

Therefore, the government has lost the confidence of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hudak has moved:

“That the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on March 22, 2010, ‘that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government,’ be amended by deleting the words following ‘that this House’ and adding thereto the following:

“Supports the principle that if you do not lose your job, you do not get severance; and

“Cannot support Premier Dalton McGuinty’s decision to pay six-month severance packages, worth as much as \$45,000 each, to more than 1,250 HST tax collectors who will transfer to the federal government without losing a day of work; and

“Strongly opposes this government for failing to address any uncertainty in the provisions the McGuinty Liberals negotiated and ratified in the collective bargaining agreements it concluded in 2006 and 2009; the comprehensive integrated tax coordination agreement; the Ontario Tax Plan for More Jobs and Growth Act, 2009; and the human resource agreement for the transfer of staff from the province of Ontario to the Canada Revenue Agency, resulting in severance payments to HST tax collectors who will transfer to the federal government without losing a day of work; and

“Failing to enact measures in the budget that amend the Ontario Tax Plan for More Jobs and Growth Act, 2009, including schedule R, section 50 and the comprehensive integrated tax coordination agreement, including part XI and Annex C, ratified and confirmed thereto;

“Concludes that if the McGuinty Liberal government is incapable of protecting the interests of Ontario families when it comes to so-called severance payments to HST tax collectors, then it cannot be trusted with the stewardship of the provincial finances.”

“Therefore, the government has lost the confidence of this House.”

Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to begin the Ontario PC caucus’s official response to the 2010 budget. Our amendment to the budget motion that you just read in is in keeping with our commitment to use all of the legislative tools at our disposal to put a stop to the inexcusable payout of \$25 million in severance to HST tax collectors who will not miss a single day on the job. We will also table an amendment to the budget bill itself, where we hope that all parties will join us in addressing this problem.

Let me put this very clearly: It is the position of the Ontario PC caucus, plainly for everybody across the aisle and watching at home, that if you don’t lose your job, you don’t get severance from the taxpayers. It is as simple as that. The \$25 million in severance to HST tax collectors is a symbolic payout, part of a larger problem

we see in the approach of this budget and the approach of the McGuinty government as a whole. It is symbolic of an approach to government where there is one rule for Liberal friends and insiders and one rule for everybody else, and it is symbolic of an approach to government where promises of action to rein in spending just cannot be taken seriously.

With that said, let me say this: On at least one point, I am in fact in agreement with the Minister of Finance. We agree that Ontario is not alone. The entire world has indeed been hit by a significant recession, and the problems of rising job losses and mounting deficits did not just hit Ontario. But that’s where the consensus ends. This entire budget, and indeed every single word out of the finance minister’s mouth to date, seems to be, in so many words, “It’s not my fault.”

1400

But that’s typical of the style of leadership we’ve come to expect from the McGuinty government. They will point fingers at everyone else every time, blame everyone else every time they can, but they never take responsibilities themselves. That invites some very serious questions and some very serious comparisons.

The recession hit everybody hard, but it hit Ontario harder still. While every jurisdiction in Canada lost some jobs, Ontario lost over half of the entire country’s. Over half of the jobs lost in this great nation fell upon families here in the province of Ontario.

Every province outside of Saskatchewan went into deficit, but sadly, Ontario’s deficit is now greater than all of the other provinces’ combined.

While every province took an economic hit during the recession, only the McGuinty government took Ontario from have to have-not status. In fact, Ontario has a lower standard of living than floundering Michigan; we have higher unemployment than bankrupt Greece.

The comparisons: Ontario fell harder, we fell faster and we fell sooner than other provinces during the recession.

We learned on Thursday, in the finance minister’s speech, that it will take us at least eight years to dig us out of the deficit supposedly brought on—

Mrs. Christine Elliott: If we’re lucky.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —by a two-year slump—as my colleague says, if we’re lucky.

Before we have a serious conversation about how to pull ourselves into a recovery, we first have to ask ourselves: Why is this the case, that Ontario has fallen so far under the McGuinty government? As my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton put it, how did we get here?

Well, the facts are clear. Not very long ago, Ontario offered opportunity for all and security for all: a province we all knew had the best schools, the best hospitals, the best roads, the best jobs in all of Canada. Young people from other provinces, from St. John’s, Newfoundland, to Victoria, BC, came to Ontario to find a good job, to build a family, to prepare for the future. Immigrants from around the world, like my own family, chose to immigrate to Ontario because they believed, if they worked hard and

played by the rules, they would provide a better future for their children and their grandchildren.

Ontario was always Canada's manufacturing hub, its agricultural heartland, its cultural centre, and its financial capital. Ontario contributed to Canada, Ontario defined Canada, and Ontario led Canada.

But for Ontario to fall so far and so fast, for Ontario to sink to have-not status under one single Premier, simply cannot be blamed on a recession.

Just look to other places, other provinces, other states, other leaders, and ask a very simple question: Just how does Ontario now compare on taxes, on spending, on deficits, on red tape and regulations, and, most of all, on jobs?

What we see is that well before this recession hit, Ontario was already falling behind, and other jurisdictions were looking and planning ahead. They were making better decisions that looked to the future. They were doing more, and now they're doing better.

Jurisdictions like British Columbia acted to aggressively lower their regulatory burden on families and on small businesses. But in Ontario, the McGuinty government imposed burdensome regulation after burdensome regulation, one red tape initiative after another. They want to regulate what we put on our lawns, the kinds of dogs we're allowed to own, the kinds of bags that a grocery store can use. You wonder where their priorities are.

The federal government acted to encourage trade and investment from all sources. But under Dalton McGuinty, the favourite approach has been one-offs and massive corporate subsidies to foreign multinationals such as Korea-based Samsung or France-based Ubisoft.

Sometimes you hear people who know the Premier say he's is a well-meaning man. They say, "He does his best." They say that Premier McGuinty shows up for work every day. But I am the son of two teachers, and I learned from them that "A" does not stand for attendance. Showing up is not good enough. You need to make the right decisions and set the right priorities, because we believe that Ontario can lead again. So I will say to the Premier and I will say to his finance minister that no, you didn't cause the flood but you did nothing to waterproof the basement, and today Ontario families are paying the price of six years of squandered opportunities.

That brings us to the 2010 budget. Last week, in his budget, Dalton McGuinty had the singular and golden opportunity to learn from the past, to change direction and provide the bold leadership that Ontario families desperately need. Sadly, he failed to deliver. That budget was a rare window of opportunity to provide a real plan that will once again make our province the best place in the world to invest, to start a business, to start a family, to create jobs again.

Last Thursday, we did not see that plan. And while we see economies in North America and right around the world recovering and adding jobs, Ontario is being left farther and farther behind. Just as we were ill-prepared to weather the storm of the economic crisis, this budget

revealed that there is no plan to capitalize on opportunities as the global economy recovers.

Let me share a couple of numbers that help prove this point from the recent Ontario budget. It is symbolic and fitting that it is only in the very last chapter of its thick budget that the McGuinty government finally gets around to talking about deficit and the debt. On the second-last page of that final chapter, on the second-last page of the entire provincial budget, we find the shocking admission that Dalton McGuinty is on course to double Ontario's debt by 2012-13. In one term alone, Dalton McGuinty will add as much provincial debt as all of the other Premiers from Confederation forward combined.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Hard to imagine.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague says that it's hard to imagine. So how did it come to this? Frankly, only a Dalton McGuinty Liberal would say that a \$21-billion deficit, a deficit 60% larger than expected, a deficit larger than all the other provinces combined, is some kind of accomplishment. Quite the opposite: This government is mortgaging the future of our children and grandchildren, and the Ontario PC caucus will fight that every step of the way.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I invite my colleague across the way to look to page 71, where the Ontario government even tries to take credit for a smaller-than-expected number of H1N1 cases as part of their deficit reduction plan; that's about what it amounted to.

We're certainly pleased that the pandemic ended up not being as bad as originally feared, but it is sad that the best this government can come up with for savings, the best idea they had to control their runaway spending, is hoping that fewer people would come up with the flu.

1410

The deficit and debt should gravely concern every Ontario family who cares about better hospitals, who cares about better classroom education, who cares about our police or better roads and better jobs in Ontario, because the single biggest threat to the services that parents rely on every day is Dalton McGuinty's massive debt, and the debt interest will take money away from crucial front-line services.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague said that it's going from \$10 billion in debt interest payments to \$16 billion, money that could have gone to hire more nurses, money that could have gone to bringing more doctors to the province of Ontario, money to help our students achieve, particularly special-needs children who can't get the help, and money to move towards a balanced budget. This is the failure of the McGuinty government, to take that money out of priority front-line services and sock it away to increasing interest on the debt.

We all know that as interest rates go up, as they inevitably will, this burden will get heavier and heavier still. As we've shown, this deficit and debt cannot simply be shrugged off and blamed on the recession. While other provinces pull themselves into a recovery, Ontario's

unfortunate plunge into have-not status has accelerated. Remember November 2008. November 2008 was the month that Newfoundland pushed itself into have status while Ontario, for the first time in Confederation, became a have-not province with its hand out to the federal government for equalization payments. Where once Ontario was proud to lend a hand to our friends on the east coast, today Newfoundland is actually financing and supporting spending in the province of Ontario.

One of the original purposes of equalization was to have the richer provinces share their wealth with the rest of the country. As a leader in Confederation, Ontario had always played that role. How is it that not only is Ontario a have-not province, we are actually sinking deeper and falling further behind? The amount of money Ontario receives in equalization handouts from other provinces now will nearly triple to almost \$1 billion in all. If we stay on this course, pretty soon Newfoundland and the other have provinces will be so far ahead that Ontario will only see them in the distance. It's shocking: Despite this occurring in November 2008, we have yet to see any schedule, any plan, any timetable to get Ontario off of Canada's welfare rolls.

To Dalton McGuinty, I say your government's performance and your budget are just not good enough, given the critical state of Ontario's economy. While families fight to make ends meet, taxes and fees, including the HST, continue to erode the household budget. While Ontario businesses struggle, corporate subsidies are shipping Ontario jobs and investment to Korea and to France. And while health care costs continue to escalate, we continue to see precious dollars squandered on Liberal insiders and consultants at eHealth and the LHINs at a time when that money is desperately in need for front-line care. This is not acceptable to me; it's not acceptable to Ontario families; it's not acceptable to the Ontario PC caucus. We need a change in direction and we need it now. Instead of the Liberal plan of doubling the debt and runaway spending, the Ontario PC caucus puts a top priority on jobs and the economy so Ontario can lead again.

Towards that end, the Ontario PC caucus put out 10 good ideas to take Ontario down an entirely different path than the one we're on today. We've asked Dalton McGuinty to implement our affordable, realistic plan to help stimulate the economy and to help create jobs in our province today. These ideas can be found at our website, 10for2010.ca

Let me give the Premier some examples. We need to make it more affordable for Ontario businesses, particularly small business owners, to hire that extra employee, to create that extra job, and that's why we've called for a payroll tax holiday to encourage new hires and eliminate job-killing red tape and regulation, to help our businesses do what they do best: to hire, to invest, to grow their businesses and create jobs in Ontario once again.

We want to put that Canadian dream of home ownership in the reach of more young Ontario families, and along that way, to create more jobs in the construction

sector, which will be so important in the months and years ahead. That's why we're calling for the one-year suspension of the land transfer tax: to kick-start jobs in construction again and help young families afford that first home.

We want to send a message to our young, skilled workers, young women and men who want to get involved in the trades, that the best place to build your career is right here in Ontario. That's why we want to change our apprenticeship ratio, to bring our apprenticeship system into the 21st century so more young tradespeople can pursue their career, build their businesses, build their families, right here in their home province of Ontario.

We want to say to northern Ontario families that this is the time when we should open up northern Ontario to its full resource potential, and on the condition that it's families and communities in the north who are the primary beneficiaries. That's why we've called to replace an arbitrary ban on northern development with an approach that includes smart new developments today and a share of the resources for the host communities to reinvest and help create jobs in northern Ontario today and well into the future.

We want every Ontario business to know that they are competing on a fair and level playing field. We want every potential investor to know that Ontario will be a reliable partner for years and years to come. That's why we want to get the government out of the business of corporate welfare subsidies and help all businesses to succeed, and make sure we work with the public sector to bring down the size of the deficit and encourage investment and job creation in Ontario once again.

We want every single family in Ontario to know that their government will respect each and every tax dollar they send to Queen's Park and not let pet projects stand in the way of creating more private sector jobs today. That's why we are proposing a sunset review of all agencies, boards and commissions of the province, to control the creep in size and costs of government and identify wasteful spending, starting with those massive regional bureaucracies, the LHINs, that have diverted hundreds of millions of dollars out of front-line care into a bloated health bureaucracy. The LHINs are a great place to start.

Finally, that is why we have proposed a red tape commission that will put every obstacle to a tough test. Any burden on job creation will go through that exacting test, and if that red tape cannot justify itself, it goes, to free up entrepreneurs to create jobs and grow their businesses in our great province once again.

I encourage all families; I encourage all investors, all business owners, to join the Ontario PC caucus at 10for2010.ca to share in the PC ideas to create jobs, to share in a new direction for our province, a new vision, to ensure Ontario is restored to its rightful place as the economic powerhouse of Confederation.

Ontario families and businesses have all had to make tough choices. We've all had to scale back our spending

during the last few years, and we believe the government should as well.

Here's a great place to start: We are challenging all members of the Legislature to join with us and amend the budget bill to cancel the \$25-million severance payout that the McGuinty government is handing out to HST tax collectors who don't miss a single day on the job.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Do the right thing.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I encourage colleagues from all parties, as my colleague from Sarnia says, to do the right thing. This is a straightforward challenge based on a simple principle shared by all Ontario families: If you do not lose your job, you do not get paid severance from the taxpayer. Like the motion says: If you can't get this right, you just cannot be trusted with the finances in the province of Ontario.

We look forward to support from government members and members of the third party. Our caucus will continue to put forward ideas because we believe that Ontario has the vast and valuable natural resources, the dedicated entrepreneurs, the skilled workforce and the proximity to the American market necessary to return Ontario to its rightful place as the economic engine of this great country. Ontario can lead again, but success is not guaranteed, especially after Thursday's budget. To

create jobs and ensure an economic recovery, Ontario needs to take a very different direction than the one we're on today. We look forward to leading that because we believe that Ontario will lead again.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

The motion is carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1422.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
		Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craiton, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 30 March 2010

Mardi 30 mars 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 30 March 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 30 mars 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Hindu prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

SUPPLY ACT, 2010

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2010

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance, and I move second reading of Bill 17, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I will be gratefully sharing my time this morning with the member for Pickering-Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I thank the government House leader for sharing her time gratefully with me this morning. I'm pleased to be able to rise today in this Legislature this morning to speak to the Supply Act, an act which authorizes the expenditure of a variety of sums for this current fiscal year, which ends on March 31.

The Supply Act is one of the cornerstone acts in the Legislature, because if passed, the bill gives the government the necessary authority to finance its programs and honour those commitments. I'm going to urge, when we complete this debate, that all members of the Legislature support the bill, because without this very necessary spending, the government would be unable to meet its obligations to the people of Ontario. For the benefit of my friends opposite, that's page 1 of 44.

The government's interim spending authority for the fiscal year ending on March 31 is provided through—and this is Colin, the page who's delivering a bit of water to start the day—the interim appropriations act, 2009-10 and the supplementary interim appropriations act for 2009-10, pending the vote on supply and the enactment of the Supply Act.

Last Thursday, the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, introduced the government's seventh provincial budget in this Legislature. The 2010 budget builds on the progress that has been achieved

since 2003 and puts the measures in place to sustain economic growth in this province.

Ontario, like the rest of the world, is feeling the impact of this global economic recession, and in spite of the good things we're hearing today, clearly, this recessionary period and its impact is far from over.

The global economic recession hit Ontario harder than other provinces. Due to job losses in its manufacturing and forest sectors, government revenues have declined steeply. In fact, no other Canadian jurisdiction experienced a sharper decline in corporate tax revenues between the years 2007-08 and 2009-10 than did Ontario.

Families, communities and related businesses have been severely impacted. The McGuinty government had to make a choice between increasing the deficit or helping to lessen the impact of the recession on the people of Ontario. We opted for the people of Ontario. The government chose to invest in Ontarians as we build on the future well-being and economic prosperity of the province.

The government's short-term stimulus investments are keeping families working in ridings throughout this province, and I can attest to that within my own riding. It is assisting in keeping communities running and businesses operating. Our investments in schools are preparing our young people for the future so they can achieve their full potential and contribute to Ontario's economy in a fashion not seen in the past.

Our continuing investments in health care provide the medical care and assistance to keep Ontarians healthy. I had the opportunity over the past number of weeks to attend two different hospital-related functions that very clearly reflect on these commitments, one in the member from Oshawa's riding, which had to do with a dialysis unit being opened in the Lakeridge health centre; and I had the opportunity, just in this past week, to attend the opening of a 30-bed complex and continuing care facility at the Ajax-Pickering site of the Rouge Valley Health System.

It gives you some indication not only of the importance of health care but of the diversity of health care expenditures that the people of Ontario, through us, have been making in securing the necessary health care—both immediate health care for things like diabetes and dialysis and also to ensure that those who have a variety of other needs of a more complex and continuing nature are also being provided service in our communities broadly.

Our infrastructure investments are supporting the programs and services Ontarians value most. Our objective is to build a strong Ontario.

0910

When we came to office in 2003, we laid out what we believe to be a prudent and responsible plan to improve our schools, our hospitals and other public services throughout Ontario. That plan is delivering results.

Class sizes in Ontario schools are smaller, and test scores are higher. There are 120,000 more students in Ontario's colleges and universities because of the government's 2005 Reaching Higher plan, the biggest multi-year investment in post-secondary education in 40 years. Investments in skills training and employment supports are helping more than one million Ontarians a year to get the services they need to find and succeed in new jobs.

In the last six years, 900,000 more Ontarians obtained access to a family doctor, and patients have shorter wait times for cancer surgery, hip replacements and CT scans.

Investments in infrastructure are creating jobs while rebuilding Ontario's roads, its bridges, its schools, hospitals and transit systems, which have been neglected for a number of years.

The government's investments are protecting the environment and creating green energy jobs, including new jobs in the clean water sector. I want to speak briefly, if I can, about the clean water sector. I have an example within my own riding, a company that has been leading this field for a number of years. I know that they will welcome the government's initiatives on clean water, and at the same time we will have the opportunity to capitalize on their expertise and ask them to share some of that expertise with the rest of Ontario.

The company's name is Eco-Tec, and they're located in Pickering. They produce high-quality industrial water. One might ask, "What's high-quality water? What does that have to do with industrial applications?" I'll give you a brief example. Among the things they do is they ensure and supply on-site clean water with no impurities in it for the purposes of the non-nuclear side of a nuclear plant. Within the boiler systems that generate the steam that drives the turbines—the energy coming from the nuclear side—obviously, they have to have water within those boilers.

Having extremely clean water ensures that those boilers can run for extended periods of time with less maintenance and limited shutdowns. Each time you have to maintain or close down a boiler to clean it because of impurities in the system, much like you might find calcium in your taps at home, it means you have to bring down the entire operation, thus not only removing power from the grid, but you also have to go through all of the efforts to bring down and stop a nuclear plant from producing power for the purpose of providing energy in the province.

This local company in Pickering provides exactly that kind of expertise. Providing highly pure water for the nuclear business, obviously, is a very specialized business operation. But they do the same thing for any number of other industries, providing extremely clean water. Not only do they operate in Canada, they also operate throughout the world. They operate in India and they

operate in China. They've been selling their expertise and providing that expertise globally. I'm looking forward to the opportunities that exist for a local company in Pickering to be able to share their expertise with Ontario, and the opportunities that will be presented to them by virtue of the government's very proactive and aggressive approach through initiatives on clean water.

To move on a little bit to some of the more social functions, the Ontario child benefit, investments in social and affordable housing, increases to benefits under the Ontario Works and the Ontario disability support program, and other investments in the government's poverty reduction strategy are improving the quality of life for Ontario's most vulnerable.

We set out a strategy some years ago to address the matter of vulnerability in our communities. I recall early budget discussions and caucus discussions in which members of caucus and government members in the front benches spoke to the need to ensure that this government kept its eye on the ball in regard to those in our communities who are most vulnerable. We've done that when the economy is difficult. We haven't lost sight of what that need is. We've done that through a variety of strategies, everything from the Ontario child benefit, certainly unique to this province and unique in many ways, through to enhancements to the ODSP and Ontario Works on an ongoing basis, as well as a very direct effort in respect to the poverty reduction strategy.

That's not even to comment on our increases to the minimum wage, because obviously the best way to reduce poverty is to provide opportunities for people to be able to earn a living wage and thus to be able to invest in the economy; it's not just ensuring that people are meeting some minimum standard of living, it's at the same time to ensure that what they're doing is effectively re-investing in the economy, particularly in their own communities.

The government's tax plan for jobs and growth, which was introduced to this Legislature a year ago, is transforming Ontario into one of the most tax-competitive jurisdictions in the industrialized world for new business investment. The tax plan that we put in place will replace the outdated retail sales tax with a modern, value-added tax and combine it with the federal goods and services tax on July 1 of this year—and that would be referred to as the HST.

It also includes significant temporary and permanent tax relief for both people and businesses, and we know that as of January 1 this year, there was a reduction in personal income tax for virtually all Ontarians. The tax plan that we put together, with other recent tax changes—and this particular plan was not the only initiative we've undertaken; you might recall that just a couple of years ago we took some initiatives on the business education tax, to reduce that broadly across the province, to standardize it so there weren't disparities, so one municipality wasn't being treated differently than another municipality in that regard and so that businesses were able to compete on an equal footing across various jurisdictions

in the province. We took that initiative as one of the tax changes that we wanted to see put in place, and we are phasing that in over a period of time.

The tax plan, together with other recent tax changes, supports new business investment and is estimated to create nearly 600,000 net new jobs within 10 years. That's part of the overall tax plan. Over a 10-year period, some 600,000 jobs are projected to be created.

Since 2003, the McGuinty government's investments to support universal health care, public education, a modern infrastructure, our vulnerable citizens, a greener Ontario and lower business costs have protected and enhanced programs and services for Ontarians, both before, during and—they will—after the recession. These investments continue to strengthen Ontario's economy and competitive advantage, boosting jobs and job growth.

We're particularly proud of the progress that has been made to date, but it's certainly not over yet. Many Ontarians are still coping with the uncertainty caused by unemployment or underemployment. Companies, big and small, in this province are still grappling with the new ways of doing business. Municipalities continue to struggle to respond to the increasing demands for services.

Our work here in this Legislature remains cut out for us. I'm proud to say that the 2010 budget, part of our Open Ontario plan, will continue to benefit Ontario's families, its businesses and our communities. Open Ontario is the McGuinty government's five-year plan to create new opportunities for jobs and economic growth. It will build on the progress that is slowly, but surely, making headway toward economic stability. It lays out the measures to manage spending, eliminate the deficit and secure the province's long-term financial sustainability.

Six years ago, the government began building a solid foundation for economic growth and prosperity through its investments, particularly in education and the skills training areas. Our government recognizes the importance of developing a well-educated workforce to compete in the new global economy. Ontario's colleges and universities play a vital role in equipping people for success and preparing them to generate the ideas, the products and the jobs that will ensure future prosperity. Today, more than 120,000 additional students are attending college and university, a 31% increase over 2002-03.

I had the opportunity last Thursday following the budget to speak with Ron Bordessa, who is the president of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. I see the member from Durham opposite knows Ron well and knows the work that's happening at UOIT. I had the opportunity to chat with him following the budget, and I have to tell you how pleased he was. I think that's reflective of the sector as a whole. I had an opportunity yesterday to see Sheldon Levy, the president of Ryerson University, and he spoke in the same fashion about how pleased they were that the government saw the priority and the need, in spite of the economic climate, to make significant investments in this budget year in addition to the investments that have been made in operating, as well

as the capital investments that are being made in post-secondary education and within the context of their particular part of the field in the university sector. They know how important it is to build a strong future economy and that we provide the opportunities for primarily young people, but not always so, to have the education and the training necessary for both current employment as well as the economy as it evolves.

0920

University per-student funding is 27% higher and college per-student operating funding is 44% higher in 2008-09, compared with 2002-03. Those are significant advancements in per-student investment, both in the university and in the college sector.

About 186,000 students are benefiting in the 2009-10 time frame from enhancements to the Ontario student assistance program that were introduced in 2004-05. We know how important it is to provide assistance to students who often can't do it on their own. In many cases those students have very limited capacity for support from family and other support mechanisms, so it's incumbent upon the government to step up to the plate for the students who need our help, to ensure that qualified students, students who can meet those standards to achieve acceptance into our colleges and universities, have the opportunity that every other young Ontarian would have. I think we have a strong obligation to ensure that occurs.

The degree completion rate has increased to 78% from some 73% just five or six years ago for university students, and to 65% from some 57% for college students—the point being that graduation rates for both university and college students are increasing. I think that speaks to the investments that are made to ensure that they have the support mechanisms in place while they're there to ensure that the staff who are there teaching, the professors who are there teaching, the support staff, can help the students—those who find themselves in some difficulty—to find their way through the system. These are not easy times; it's not an easy transition for a student to move into a university or a college, and we don't want to lose them along the way because they don't have the necessary supports.

A total of some 260 additional first-year medical student spaces will be created by 2011-12. That's a 38% increase from 2004-05. Clearly, to have enough family doctors in place, we need to continue to increase the medical spaces available and ensure that those young people moving through medicine move into a practice that allows families to have the health care they need.

That's why post-secondary education remains a top priority of this government. As part of the Open Ontario plan, new commitments to post-secondary education will add 20,000 new spaces to colleges and universities in the 2010-11 year, reflecting a new annual investment of \$310 million in post-secondary operating grants. It's exactly those dollars that I was referencing when I spoke about Mr. Levy and Mr. Bordessa in the context of their role as the presidents of two of our universities. Our government

will also be aggressively promoting Ontario's post-secondary schools abroad to encourage the best students from around the world to study and settle here and contribute to our economy.

Since 2003, the government has made tremendous strides toward helping students improve their reading, their writing and their math skills in elementary and secondary schools. These programs have helped more students achieve the provincial standard on province-wide tests. Additional annual investments to improve literacy and numeracy in 2009-10 totalled \$95 million.

Since 2005, the government's student success strategy has been helping students in the grades 7 to 12 area tailor their education to their individual strengths, their goals and their interests. Graduation rates increased to 79% in the 2008-09 year, from 68% in the 2003-04 year. That's an increase in graduation from post-secondary education of some 11%. That's not to be underestimated, the importance of those 11% of students who have graduated and are now graduating. For us, often it's numbers, but when it comes down to that individual student, the one who wasn't graduating but is graduating today, that will make a difference in their life today and certainly make a difference in their life in the future. This means an additional 11%, or 16,500 more students graduating each year.

Students from junior kindergarten to grade 3 are receiving more individual attention from their teachers. We're achieving our goal to reduce the size of primary classes: 90% of classes now have 20 or fewer students this year, compared to 31% in the 2003-04 year. All primary classes now have 23 or fewer students this year, compared to 64% in the 2003-04 year.

My wife, who retired just a couple of years back, spent virtually her entire career in the elementary system. She kids about the fact that she went from high school to the elementary system and taught grades 7 and 8 and 5 and 3, and ended up later on at grade 1. Once she was there, she spent 10 or 11 years, and at times she said, "I felt like I was going backwards," in the context of the grade level. But the fact was that she was very good at what she did. She stayed at that grade level because she understood the needs of young people at that level, and she relished the achievement of those students coming in at four and five years old—they're into grade 1 at about six years old—and watching their growth in those few months she had them before her.

She'd come home at night and she would tell me about the challenges she faced in the classroom. I know there are other members of this place who have either been in a classroom or have family members, spouses or neighbours in classrooms, and they hear about the challenges that they have and that they continue to have in the classroom setting. During those years, her final years of teaching, the demands increased, the challenges of students increased, and it made the job that much more difficult. The initiatives to reduce class size in those primary classes provide those teachers now with the opportunity to spend that more individualized time with each

student, and particularly provide opportunities to spend time with those students with the greatest needs.

Early learning is also an important part of this government's Open Ontario plan. Full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds will be phased in starting this September. Nearly 600 schools across the province, benefiting up to 35,000 children, will be covered, with a focus on those areas of lower income or greater challenge. A full implementation of full-day learning will employ up to 3,800 additional teachers and 20,000 early childhood educators and benefit about 247,000 children. Our goal remains to fully implement the program by the 2015-16 fiscal year.

Each year, more than one million Ontarians rely on Employment Ontario for help in finding work or acquiring job training. Over the past two years, demand for employment and training services has increased sharply. Obviously, that won't be a surprise to anyone in this place or, I would suggest, anyone within the workforce in Ontario. In response, the government boosted Employment Ontario's spending on jobs and skills training to about \$1.6 billion in each of the last two fiscal years, with a special focus on workers affected by the economic recession.

Our Second Career strategy continues to provide financial assistance for laid-off workers to undertake longer-term training. Since its launch, over 27,000 people have participated, and another 30,000 participants will be supported over the next two years. This means nearly 60,000 participants in total since the program began in June 2008. These are opportunities for those who have been displaced in the workforce through layoff not simply to wait to be recalled into the role they had, but opportunities to retrain and prepare themselves for new careers.

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By August of this year, a new one-stop access will be in place to make it easier for job seekers, employers and communities to obtain the full range of programs and services that are needed.

We'll also launch the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers agreement to support skills training projects in hard-hit communities throughout this province. There's no question: We've all seen the instance where older workers have even greater difficulty in reintegrating into the workforce if they find themselves out of the employment arena, through layoff or because a particular manufacturer or company discontinues providing any service. Those older workers often will not have the skills necessary in today's marketplace and won't be conversant with the new technologies that are so important for employment in this province currently and which will become increasingly important in the years ahead.

The Targeted Initiative for Older Workers is a federal-provincial initiative to assist unemployed older workers in vulnerable communities. Any time this government can work with its federal or municipal counterparts in a co-operative fashion, it is good for Ontarians. It's what Ontarians expect of their governments: the capacity to

work together on initiatives that are important to Ontarians.

Our summer jobs program is helping youth, especially in those high-needs neighbourhoods. The program will support nearly 110,000 jobs and services for students this summer.

Additional support services include workplace-based pilots for literacy training, enhanced apprenticeship programs and improved training and employment supports for underrepresented groups.

The province has made a commitment to break the cycle of poverty. Families, children, and low-income working adults are already benefiting from our overall poverty reduction agenda. Our poverty reduction strategy has set out an aggressive target to reduce child poverty by 25% over five years. This means lifting 90,000 children out of poverty by 2013. Key achievements in the poverty reduction strategy include the expanded children in need of treatment program, which provides urgent dental and general anaesthesia service to children in low-income families until their 18th birthday, and Ontario's after-school initiative, which supports after-school activities in high-needs communities.

To assist people on social assistance in becoming more financially independent, the government has taken a number of steps:

—first, allowing full-time post-secondary students who have employment earnings to keep all of their social assistance benefits. That's certainly an inducement for those who find themselves on social assistance to re-engage in the academic sector, through skills training or college training or university training, to prepare themselves for a better future;

—secondly, changing the rules governing the receipt of earnings so that people can keep a larger portion of their social assistance benefits. To the extent that we can do that, it's good for those Ontarians to feel that they can be contributing members of society from the standpoint of a work environment, but at the same time to not find that their social assistance benefits are dramatically clawed back;

—thirdly, extending health benefits to people making the transition from social assistance to employment. We've heard consistently that one of the very serious challenges for those who are wanting to move from social assistance into the workplace, particularly those with children, is the capacity to ensure that health benefits will help them bridge from the supports they have on social assistance to the supports they will get in employment. It has always been a grave concern of those on social assistance that when they move into the workplace they will lose those health benefits, either for themselves or for their children;

—fourthly, increasing the amount of social assistance benefits that parents can keep if they have employment earnings and incur unlicensed child care costs.

Those are just some examples of the initiatives that the government has been taking to assist those on social assistance as they take the necessary steps to move back into the workplace.

In our 2010 budget, starting this fall, we propose to increase adult basic needs and maximum shelter allowances by 1% for those Ontarians on ODSP and Ontario Works. This move will provide families and individuals on social assistance with additional benefits of about \$57 million in total annually. We would suggest that it has been a hallmark of this government that we've made—although some will say modest—increases to ODSP and OW allowances on an annual basis. My recollection over my time here is that, since 2003, there was one budget year in which we weren't able to achieve that, but in each of the other budget years there has been an adjustment to OW and ODSP rates to ensure that those folks continue to move along in a fashion that keeps pace with the current economic climate.

As well, our government continues to review the social assistance programs to ensure that they are easier to understand and more transparent and sustainable in the long term, so the system can continue to support those who are most vulnerable in this province.

Ontario's minimum wage will rise to \$10.25 per hour starting on March 31. That would be tomorrow, I believe. This will be the seventh consecutive year that the minimum wage has been increased since we took office in 2003. I said in my opening comments that having a wage that becomes a living wage not only provides the necessary support to provide food on your table, a roof over your head, support for your families and a level of dignity about what you do, but it also allows for investment back in the economy. That investment back in the economy supports those who are in the workforce.

Among other key initiatives in the government's poverty reduction area—certainly, an increase in the minimum wage moves people out of the poverty cycle by virtue of employment, but there are other initiatives we've taken within the poverty reduction strategy. These include an affordable housing agreement with the federal government, signed in June 2009, to deliver new affordable housing to Ontario and renovate existing social housing. More than 3,000 social housing renovation projects have already been committed as part of this federal-provincial stimulus package.

We also have ongoing funding for municipal rent banks to assist tenants who are at risk of eviction or homelessness. I recall that debate earlier on that we had both in here and within our caucus about the need for a rent bank to protect those who may find themselves moved out of the accommodation they currently have through eviction. It's better to work to keep those people in some type of housing than have them put on the streets in some fashion—them and their families.

The McGuinty government believes in a strong, universal health care system. Since 2003, the government has taken significant steps to transform the health care sector while creating a system that is patient-focused. The government has acted on Ontario's need for shorter wait times, better access to care, promoting health and preventing illness, and updating infrastructure. The government has implemented the wait-times strategy. It was

not that long ago that we didn't know what the wait times were because nobody had taken the initiative to bother measuring them or even attempted to find out what those wait times were, let alone compare those wait times from hospital to hospital and jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

The wait-times strategy has made the wait for elective surgery, from cataract surgery to cancer, faster. Since 2008, patients with complex conditions are spending 8% less time waiting in the emergency room, and patients with minor conditions are spending a modest amount of time—less at this point.

But we need to do better in each area. One of the areas we need to do better on is emergency care. We need to have people moving through emergency care, either out of emergency care where it's not necessary and/or into a hospital bed for acute care, in a more expeditious fashion. We need to see the backlog in emergency care cleared up.

An investment of \$1.1 billion over four years, which began in 2007, provides funding for the unprecedented aging-at-home strategy, which helps seniors live with dignity and independence in the comfort of their own homes. Those of us with aging parents know how important it is for them to have the opportunity, if at all possible, to be able to age at home. The alternatives are not what seniors in our province want. They would prefer, given the opportunity, to have the support of their family and the dignity to be able to live in their own homes.

0940

We've made tremendous strides to provide better access to health care since 2003.

As I said earlier, about 900,000 more Ontarians who did not have a family doctor now have access to one, 2,295 more doctors are practising in Ontario, and we've created 170 family health teams. I remember the early discussion around the family health teams as we launched the first 50 of those. I must say, as one member, I was anxious that my region, my area, was not in that first group of 50 health teams. Subsequently, I've seen the success of the Durham West health team operating their facility out of Pickering but servicing a much broader Durham West community. I've seen the success—I've had a chance to meet with the doctors, the support staff and the nurses who are working in that environment—and the enthusiasm they feel for this model that we've put in place, their capacity to work together and provide support to patients and direct their services specifically to the needs that are there, and in many cases free up their expertise for other patients by using a team approach.

Canada's first nurse-practitioner-led clinics were established, and 25 more will be open by 2012.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine was opened. In 2009, the school celebrated its first graduating class of 55 students. Certainly, we understand the need for the provision of practitioners throughout Ontario, but even more so in northern Ontario. This can only go to help provide the doctors we need in that part of our province.

More than 8,200 beds were added to long-term-care homes across the province, and investments in home care

have expanded services to about 500,000 Ontarians annually.

We've also managed the growth of health care spending at a responsible rate, including proposing reforms to Ontario's drug system that will facilitate lower generic drug prices.

The government has toughened tobacco laws, including banning smoking in public places and encouraging more Ontarians to quit.

An expanded newborn screening program in 2006 makes it Canada's most comprehensive, with three free-of-charge vaccines for families, saving them about \$600 per child.

Twenty minutes of physical activity was introduced every day as a mandated part of our school program, as well as a new law requiring schools to follow new nutritional standards for food and beverages sold on school premises.

The government has invested significantly in infrastructure that supports the public health system valued by all Ontarians. Construction is under way or completed in more than 100 major hospital projects. These include, but certainly aren't limited to, the Credit Valley Hospital redevelopment, four new floors at the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, modernizing patient facilities and expanding the emergency department at the York Central Hospital, and expansion to various sections as well as construction, as I mentioned earlier, of the 30-bed complex continuing care wing of the Rouge Valley Health System. Just this past late fall, we opened the new emergency facility at the Ajax-Pickering site, and that was most welcome. Those are the kinds of investments that people see. They may see a building going up at their hospital or an expansion going on, but most people for the most part don't engage in that part of the facility on a regular basis. But families do see the ER—not by choice, mind you, but they do see the ER. I can tell you that within our community, the opening of the new emergency area within the Ajax-Pickering hospital was very well received.

Modern infrastructure boosts productivity, supports economic growth and improves the quality of life that Ontario enjoys. For almost 30 years, Ontario's infrastructure has been neglected. Underinvestment, aging infrastructure and growth pressures have resulted in a substantial infrastructure deficit. In 2005, we committed \$30 billion to ReNew Ontario. We are on a \$32-billion program over two years for stimulus and infrastructure spending, and we plan on continuing that.

Being cognizant of the clock, even with my distance glasses off, because I can't read with them on and I can't see with them off, I'm noticing we're down to about 30 seconds of time remaining. I wish there were more time. This is a topic that I would love to have the opportunity to speak to more extensively. Let me just say that I'm hoping that as this debate continues today, at the end of it, all members of the House will see the need to support the Supply Act and will vote in favour of that. I'm urging them to do that, and look forward to the debate as it continues.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was interesting, listening to the member from Pickering–Scarborough East speak about this bill, the supply bill. Like all other Liberals we hear so often in this House, he spoke of building on the progress, and he spoke of the open doors, but he didn't actually speak of what progress the Liberals have made.

I think it's important that we put on the record some of the Liberal progress that we have seen here in Ontario. We have seen a \$3-billion HST tax grab. We didn't hear him mention anything about tax increases, but we all know there's a \$3-billion HST tax grab.

He didn't talk about the earlier, \$24-billion health care tax. Now, I know they sometimes call it a premium and they sometimes call it a levy—

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Oh. Pardon me. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member from Thornhill and the member from Simcoe–Grey as well.

Mr. John O'Toole: And the member from Durham.

Mr. Randy Hillier: And the member from Durham.

They also cancelled, in the 2004 budget, the lower- and middle-income personal tax. They've increased business taxes. They've put on their new electronics tax, of course, for TVs and computers. They cancelled the seniors' property tax credit. They brought in a \$4-a-tire tax and a multitude of new taxes on alcohol and tobacco during their regime. And of course, there was that other little one last week, or the week just before the budget, the \$53-million hydro tax. I think they called that one "an investment" but not a tax.

They've also delisted chiropractic services, eye care and physiotherapy, but there was never a mention of that in their talking about their progress. Of course, we've also seen this latest announcement that Ontario Hydro will be ramping up costs for all users of hydroelectric energy in this province.

They also talk about their Open Ontario plan, and it's a wonderful, beautiful-sounding phrase: Open Ontario plan. But what they don't talk about is how they shut the door on manufacturing, and killed our manufacturing and resource sector in this province. Did anybody hear them talk about the 62 mills that are closed in the north? Did anybody hear them talk about the 45,000 lost jobs in forestry? Did anybody hear them talk about the 210,000 manufacturing jobs that were lost? Nothing. That's part of their Open Ontario plan. Open the door to the trustee, I guess, under the McGuinty plan.

And also, what about our have-not status? We know that there was a recession, a significant recession, but nobody weathered it worse in this country than Ontario. We're the only ones to have fallen into have-not status during this recession.

Of course, maybe the Liberal government is pleased that they got a \$300-million equalization welfare payment last year from the federal government, because next year they're budgeting on getting a \$900-million equalization welfare cheque from the federal government. Is

this their idea of progress: getting a bigger welfare cheque every year from the federal government? That's what we see on this side of the House. That is their progress: spending more, taxing more, delivering less and doing it in a poor fashion for the people of this province.

I also want to speak to one other subject in this supply debate, and that is the \$25 million that this Liberal government is throwing down the drain—money from the hard-working citizens of Ontario. It's on this tax collector severance. Of course we were told that harmonizing the sales taxes will be a great boon and a great benefit to the people of this province. There will be less administration cost; there will be improvements in delivery. Most people would have thought that we would have harmonized the bureaucracy with that but, no, we didn't. We didn't lessen the bureaucracy. This Liberal government took 1,250 tax collectors off the provincial payroll and has deposited them on the federal payroll.

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Interjection: They didn't lose one day of work.

Mr. Randy Hillier: They aren't missing a day of work; they aren't missing a stride. They're not missing anything. In fact, this Liberal government is giving them a reward for keeping their jobs. They're rewarding them \$25 million, up to \$45,000 each. These tax collectors, members of the Ontario public service—many of them don't expect this severance; many of them don't want this severance. But this Liberal government figures, "Well, it's just taxpayers' money anyway. What does it really matter? We're just taking money from people who worked hard and sweated and laboured to pay their bills. We're just going to take \$25 million of it and give it to somebody for keeping their job." This is the Liberal idea of saving the taxpayers money: saving them money by transferring those employees to the federal government and giving them a bonus out the door.

Everybody in this province knows that severance is intended for when you lose your job, to make up and mitigate some of the harmful effects of losing your job and not having an income. That's what we all know severance is for. But this Liberal government believes it's for something else. It's there for a reward for some people—but not for most people. I know we've heard from the Liberal government that, "These were in the details and we didn't really understand the details." We often hear that the devil lives in the details in every agreement. Well, I believe that the devil doesn't read the details, and that's what happened with this HST severance package: Nobody in the Liberal government actually read those details. Had they, they could have easily gone to the union, they could have gone to those tax collectors, and said, "Listen, we can either terminate your employment and you will get your severance, or, if you forgive that severance, the federal government will take you on in the same role." But that didn't happen, did it? Nobody looked at it. The devil was certainly in the details, and they didn't read them.

We see the hardship that is happening in this province in our ridings; we see the high unemployment rates; we

see the loss of manufacturing jobs; we see the declining revenues; and we see a declining status relative to others. Of course, in our own country we are now in the have-not status. Relative to other provinces, we are in worse shape. We lost more jobs than all the other provinces combined. We have an unemployment rate that's higher than Alberta, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia. We have the highest one here, under your guidance. Our GDP, our standard of living, is lower now than one of the jurisdictions in the States that has been tremendously hard hit by this recession: Michigan. We have a lower standard of living now than Michigan, the famous rust belt of the United States. We have a lower standard of living than they do. And this government talks about Open Ontario and building on their progress. Well, I'll tell you this, and we all know this: These people are living in a fool's paradise. But what they have to remember is that a fool's paradise is a wise man's hell, and that is what they are creating in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll be splitting my time with other members, I'm sure, who will be here a little bit later. Anyway, I want to say upfront that I must say this was a very interesting budget from a whole bunch of different perspectives.

As I look at it from the perspective of what it means to Ontario and what it means to northern Ontario, there are some quite interesting points that I think could be drawn from what the government has put forward.

I want to just say upfront that it's unbelievable and quite interesting when you look at what the government has decided by way of fiscal policy, that it's going to put off the decision about how they are going to balance the deficit to two Parliaments from now. I just think that is unbelievable. I haven't seen anybody have that much chutzpah in a long, long time.

I've got to say that for the government to say, "We have a deficit today, and we're not going to balance it in this Parliament, we're not going to balance it in the next Parliament, but we're going to balance it in the Parliament after that," is almost like saying, "We're going to pass the problem on to somebody else. We don't know who, but we can fairly assume as Liberals that we won't be the government at that point." I just think that is really, really something, as far as chutzpah, that a government could put forward.

I think what people look to see is that this Parliament and this government make decisions on an annual basis as to what should be happening and what should not be happening to both revenues and expenditures in the province of Ontario. As I look at a number of things inside this budget, I can agree, but I can disagree also with other issues when it comes to overall budget policy.

We understand that we're in a deficit. There's nobody in this House who's going to say, "There would be no deficit if it had been us in government," or somebody else, because we understand there is a huge problem in the world economy. Ontario being an industrial province

as far as output, as most of our products are through natural resources or through industrial outputs, we are greatly affected by what happens in the world economy. We trade with everybody from the United States to European countries and people on the Pacific Rim, so we understand it's an interconnected global economy. Ontario, as such, is going to have some difficulty trying to balance the books with the type of fiscal problems that we find ourselves in today on a world basis.

So I understand there was going to be a deficit this year as a result of what happened in the meltdown of about a year and a half ago. I also understand that some of the decisions that needed to be made were not going to be easy ones as far as how we position Ontario in order to balance its budget so that it can afford the programs that we so much want in this province.

For example, there's not a member in this House who will say, "Well, let's cut health care," because at the end of the day we all understand that health care services are important to all of us. You may not need health care today, but you certainly are going to need it at some point in your life, and you want to make sure that when you get to the emergency room, when you get to the community care clinic or you go to the doctor's office, the services that you are going to need to make you well and to manage your illness are there for you. You don't want to be in a position of having worked all your life and all of a sudden finding out that in some future Parliament, health care services are reduced to the point that you have a hybrid system like what we see in the United States, where those with a lot of money get better service than those with less money.

We understand there are challenges to all governments when it comes to being able to balance the budget, but what really is astounding in this budget is that the government is putting off the decisions that need to be made to a Parliament three Parliaments from now. I just think that is unbelievable. It seems to me that we should at least, in broad strokes, be saying what we're going to do to deal with the revenue issues and what we're going to do to deal with the expenditure issues that the government in this Parliament has to turn its attention to.

On the revenue side, what is this government really doing to deal with assisting those within our business community and entrepreneurs out there to invest in Ontario so that we're able to build the wealth that is necessary in this province not just to provide jobs but also to provide the revenue we need from those jobs and the income from those corporations and small businesses that make up the budget of Ontario and allow us to pay for programs such as health care, education, plowing our roads in the winter and doing the necessary things that make infrastructure work in the province of Ontario? I would argue that that is where we need to put most of our emphasis in this Parliament.

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If I was the Premier of Ontario, I would be looking at what I can do in order to try to prime the pump of the economy of Ontario, because I would recognize that we

need to rebuild the revenues that we've lost and build them beyond the point that we have lost them. You would only do that in a strong economy.

What can Ontario do in order to get us to that point? As a northerner, I can tell you one very simple one: Ontario was built on natural resources. The mining, forestry and hydro developments that have happened in northern Ontario made up a large part of the GDP of this province. Ontario was built as a result of the wealth that is in the ground and in our forests, but we have managed, over the years, to change policies to the point that those industries and those sectors aren't doing as well as they could.

You have to remember that if you have a mine operating in Sudbury, Timmins, Kirkland Lake or Red Lake, or a forestry company operating in Ear Falls or wherever it might be, the supplies and services that allow those places to run and operate, by and large, come from southern Ontario. Manufacturers and the service sector and the finance sector and others are residing here in Ontario. My point is that a strong resource sector is not only good for northern Ontario, it is good for all of this province, because we all benefit when there is a strong resource sector.

I look at what has happened over the past number of years and where we are today in the resource sector, and it is no surprise. The litany goes on. We look at community after community in northern Ontario where, in some cases, the only employer in town is shut down. If you look at Cochrane, Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing, Opasatika, Hearst, Constance Lake, Thunder Bay, Ear Falls, Red Lake—if you look at almost every community in northern Ontario, there has been a negative effect to what has happened when it comes to resource policy in this province. Their employers, in some cases, have closed down entirely or have reduced operations and have fewer people working for them, creating less wealth for the province of Ontario and the tax revenue needed for this province to provide those services that we think are so important to each other.

What has happened simply is this: There was a time when governments in Ontario understood that they needed to keep an eye to natural resource policy, that a provincial government needed to make sure that the mining, forestry, hydroelectric and agricultural sectors were taken care of in the sense of making sure that we had policies that allowed them to flourish. For many years in this province, governments of all stripes ensured that that was the case.

I would argue that Ontario started to fall behind some years ago. It started not entirely under the watch of this government, but I can tell you that it started under the Peterson government for darn sure and the Conservative government before that, and even ours to a certain degree. As a result of that, what we're seeing is natural resource policies having morphed into something that has, at the end, really hindered the ability of the resource sector to weather the storm that we have gone into when it comes to commodity prices and what's happening with

being able to operate a plant in some of these communities.

But let's look at us as Ontario and compare ourselves to other jurisdictions. If you look at Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Quebec, I would argue that in those provinces, those governments still understand that you need to have good public policy when it comes to the natural resource sector. You look at the investments that are done in the exploration field and mining: We know that the majority of the Canadian and international dollars that are raised for exploration and the mining industry now are no longer coming to Ontario as they used to. Ontario has some of the best geology in the world to find all kinds of mines, from gold mines to diamond mines, but they're now going into the province of Quebec and yes, even into British Columbia. Why is that? Because money, when it comes to investment, goes to where they feel it's the friendliest. Where are they able to get the best bang for their buck? Where is it that they're more likely to get a return on that investment?

What has happened here in Ontario is we have turned our attention away from natural resource policies and we have made it more difficult for those investments to happen here in Ontario. As a result, other jurisdictions like Quebec and others are doing far better than us when it comes to attracting that money.

What are some of the policies the government has done that I think need to be addressed in regard to natural resources? There are many. Just on the question of environmental regulation in the province of Ontario, nobody can argue with me that if you compare the mining industry today to what it was 30 or 40 years ago, it is no longer the same. It has become one of the safest industries in Canada, and it has become one of the most environmentally responsible industries in Canada as well. We are able to mine now like we never have before as far as productivity, but we've also decreased the impact on the environment, and we've certainly made it a safer place for workers to go. The difficulty is that government has not figured out ways of being able to do that in such a way that makes it financially more sustainable for companies to make this type of investments.

We're looking now at a system that has become far more—how would you say? I don't want to use the word "bureaucratic," but far more difficult to navigate your way through when it comes to being able to get permits and when it comes to being able to even understand what the government wants at the end of the day. As a result, it is really making it difficult for people who are bringing mines online to work their way through. They're having to spend far more money on permitting than they ever have before. If you're trying to invest in Ontario, you know that if you find a mine, it's going to cost you more money to put it into production because of the way that we've organized our permitting structure and others for the mining and forestry sectors—far harder to get in.

Am I arguing that we should lessen the environmental regulation? That's not my argument. My argument is, make clear and concise what it is that you want as a goal

when it comes to impact on the environment, then ensure that they're able to get there with technologies that exist, and make sure that they make those investments necessary. The way that we do it now, we spend more money with consultants going between the government and the industry trying to figure out what it is that they want in the first place and then trying to engineer a solution. We spend all kinds of money that, quite frankly, could be spent better.

Take a look at what's happening right now with the start-ups of the Detour Lake gold mine and the Lake Shore gold mines up in Timmins. We have, interestingly, two premier ore bodies that are ready to go. Lake Shore has already made the decision to go forward with the expansion of their operations on the existing site and also for what they call Timmins West, an investment to move them forward into a production of a brand new facility, a brand new mine. If you look at the difficulty they're having on the permitting side, it is really discouraging at times. Because all that industry asks is, "What is it you want us to do? Let us get there." Instead, what we have is a process that is quite user-unfriendly and makes it far more expensive for operators to get their mines into operation.

I know I'll get a visit from my friends from the environmental community soon as a result of my comments this morning, but I remind people that when we had the old Detour Lake gold mine running, and it started I believe in the late 1970s early 1980s, that particular gold mine operated for 10 or 15 years. As a result of the laws that we have in this province, which is the mine reclamation act, when that mine shut down, we took apart the entire mine that was there. We rehabilitated it to the ground, to the point that if you were to fly over that about a year ago—because now they're back doing work there—you would have had a hard time knowing there was a mine there. We had revegetated the area, we had taken out the power lines, and we had tried to take the land back to the most natural state possible. My point is that we have good laws in this province that can allow us to do development in a way that makes some sense, but the difficulty is it is becoming harder and harder to achieve those goals based on how the government wants you to get there.

My point is that natural resource policies are important from the perspective of understanding that we have natural resource policies in this province that support our activities in mining, forestry, hydro development and agriculture so that we're able to build the industry and strengthen it so that we have the jobs in northern Ontario and revenues for the people of Ontario. I say to my friends here in the House, clearly what has happened is that we have changed our attention from what used to be good natural resource policies to those of not paying attention to that as much as possible.

You take a look at some of the other difficulties that we have in mining and forestry, and I think the interesting one is the question of electricity prices. Up until about seven or eight years ago, Ontario had an electricity

rate that was competitive with Quebec and Manitoba. Why? Because we had a public utility called Ontario Hydro. It was run as a crown corporation, as an economic development tool in order to allow utility customers such as Kidd Creek Mines, Tembec pulp and paper and others to operate and keep their costs down on the energy side so that we could compete with other jurisdictions that are in the same business as us. It's hard for us to compete with workers in South America who are making fewer dollars per hour in a paper plant than trying to compete in a paper plant in northern Ontario that pays a fairly good wage—you have to have something else to offset the overall cost, and one of those things was electricity.

1010

The government, in its day, decided that it was going to change hydroelectric policy in this province. We've moved from a crown corporation to a partly privatized system that is now somewhat deregulated but re-regulated in a pretty difficult way. We find ourselves in the worst possible system of both worlds.

Electricity prices are more than double the rate that people have to pay in Quebec or Manitoba when it comes to electricity.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, it's higher than that. My point is that we're way out of whack.

If you look at what you've got to pay here in Ontario, it is way, way higher than what you would pay in Quebec or Manitoba. Again, if you're making a decision on where to invest and you're saying, "There are dollars to build a sawmill, or there are dollars to build a new mine, because we've discovered one, and I can operate that in Ontario or I can do that in Quebec," most will go to Quebec just on the price of electricity. In fact, what we saw with the Xstrata announcement last December, when Xstrata decided it was going to close its smelter and refinery in Timmins, putting 700 people directly out of work—about 3,000 direct and indirect jobs—the key consideration for them leaving was electricity prices.

The government says, "Oh, those people from northern Ontario, they're making noises about hydro power. Those pesky little mayors are organizing, coming together. The opposition and unions and economic development corporations and chambers of commerce are all speaking in one voice in northern Ontario. We're going to try to silence those voices."

What they announced in the budget last week was the northern industrial electricity rate. When you listened to Minister Duncan speak, he said it is going to reduce by 25% the hydro bill for an industrial user in northern Ontario. When I first heard it, I thought, "Well, that's interesting. We're still going to be higher than Quebec, but we're not going to be as high as we were. That's putting our foot in the door. The door is slightly open. Maybe we can push it open and get some more."

Then we started looking into the details of what this is really all about, and it's really a shell game. Currently, there is a program that provides roughly about a 20% to 25% reduction on hydro bills in northern Ontario—as I

call it, the northern rebate program. It applies only to pulp and paper mills. On average, it means to say that if a qualifying mill gets into this program, they get about \$18 per megawatt that they will receive as a credit towards their hydro bill.

This new program is being announced for three years, and it's going to make a difference of \$18 plus \$2, which brings it to \$20. What they're doing is taking an existing program, renaming it as something else, and then they're putting an extra \$2 per megawatt into the system.

You say to yourself, "What is this going to do to change the economics of a pulp and paper mill in northern Ontario?" There's not a pulp and paper mill in northern Ontario that isn't already on the NR program. We were looking for a renewal of at least three years for the NR program. We've been trying for the last year or so to get the government to renew that program, because it is one of the key things that are allowing some of our remaining paper mills to operate.

What do we get? The government announces, yes, a three-year extension. They added \$2, but it's not a 25% decrease in electricity over and above what industry is already paying. What it works out to be is about \$2 per megawatt. If you look at what it means to a paper mill that's in Kapuskasing, currently it would mean that rather than getting a rebate of \$18 per megawatt, you would get about \$20 per megawatt.

Is it good? Sure, it's a step in the right direction, but it's certainly not anywhere near what the government has pretended to announce in its budget, which is a 25% decrease in electricity costs for industrial users.

I would argue that the \$150 million added that was set in the budget, the \$150 million each and every year for three years, so year 1, \$150 million, year 2, year 3, they get \$150 million into this program—I would be really interested in seeing if this includes the money that's already being spent by the existing NR program. Is the government actually putting in \$150 million a year? That's what I ask myself. That's something that we're doing a bit of research on.

For the mining sector: Yes, the mining sector was not able to apply to the current NR program, and what the government is saying in this budget speech is that for the northern industrial electricity rate, any industrial user now may be able to apply. But I have a little bit of news for you: \$150 million a year when it comes to reductions in electricity rates is not enough money to cover the electricity bill of all the industrial users. If you look at Kidd Creek alone, they're using a million megawatts per year. If you figure out what that is worth, that in itself, just with that one company, if you were to apply the logic of the 25%, is a big dent in the \$150 million a year. So—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I'm going to get to that in a second. I'm not even at that yet. But my point is, the \$150 million a year, even if it was new money, does not cover all the industrial users in northern Ontario, so somebody's going to get left out. As you take a look at what they have said in the budget, it is going to be a

program that you're going to have to apply to, and you are going to have to be accepted. Not every industrial user will benefit from this program, and most of them are already in the NR program, so it won't mean a hell of a lot in the first place.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am pleased to welcome into the gallery the father and godmother of page Erin Gaudette: Matthew Gaudette and Lynn Gaudette, from Tecumseh, Ontario. Welcome.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to introduce a couple of individuals, one from my riding and one from Windsor.

George Bahdi is here as my guest. I also want to mention that his son Lucas, for his birthday, raised over \$1,100 for victims of the Haiti earthquake disaster. Congratulations to Lucas.

The other guest I'm pleased to introduce is Reem Bahdi, who is George's sister. She's an associate professor and a co-director at the University of Windsor.

I'm pleased to recognize both of them here with me today.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to recognize Professor Mark Langer, who is with us in the gallery today. Mark is the president of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. He is kindly inviting all members to their third annual Queen's Park reception from 3 to 6 today in rooms 228 and 230. Please come.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have the great pleasure to introduce two grade 10 classes from Oakwood Collegiate. They told me they've heard a lot about the MPPs here and they came today to see how real MPPs behave.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to introduce two visitors from the energy sector here today: Mr. John Brace, the president and CEO of Northland Power; and Rick Martin, the manager of renewable energy. They're here to talk about renewable energy projects.

MEMBERS' ANNIVERSARIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the member from Nepean—Carleton as she celebrates her fourth anniversary in the chamber, and the members from Whitby—Oshawa and Parkdale—High Park, as well.

WEARING OF PINS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On April 9, we will be celebrating the anniversary of the Vimy Ridge victory in World War I.

Almost 3,600 Canadians died in that victorious battle, and 10,600 people were injured and wounded.

I have purchased from the Vimy Foundation 107 pins for all members of the Legislature to wear prior to April 9 to recognize this momentous victory and this very, very proud day for Canada.

Later this afternoon, I, along with my colleagues Mr. Zimmer and Mr. Prue, will be presenting a bill to the Legislature to recognize this day and to ensure that our flags at Queen's Park will be flown at half-mast on April 9 to recognize the tremendous sacrifice that our veterans made for us.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to wear this pin in the Legislature before and during April to recognize this very, very special date and the sacrifice of our wonderful troops in the past so that we will never forget it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the Ombudsman, André Marin, was looking into your LHINs and now you want to show him the door. We now find out that you're still handing out untendered contracts to Liberal-friendly consultants through the LHINs, and now, all of the sudden, you want to kill the public review mandated by your own legislation of the LHINs.

Millions of dollars in untendered contracts have gone to Liberal-friendly consultants through the LHINs, including the Courtyard Group, and all we get from the Premier and his minister are more denials and excuses rather than accountability. This certainly looks a lot like eHealth. Premier, what are you trying to hide?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the opportunity to talk about the importance of LHINs and the value that they bring to the integration of our health care system.

I know that all of us in this House—indeed, all of us in this province—understand that we have to do things differently in health if we want to maintain a very strong, universal health care system in this province. The LHINs are doing that very hard work that is driving the integration between our hospitals, our home care sector, our long-term-care sector and our community services, supports like Meals on Wheels, for example, that keep seniors in their homes as long as possible.

I completely support the model of the LHINs, and we will continue to strengthen the LHINs as we move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, your LHINs are an absolute mess, and all you're doing is looking the other way.

Our freedom-of-information records reveal that your LHINs have ignored your so-called new rules against untendered contracts on at least six different occasions to date. When the Premier said that the government and all of its agencies will no longer allow untendered contracts for consultants, you didn't actually mean all cases, you meant when it was convenient; you meant some cases.

Back to the Premier, who dodged my first question: Where exactly are the exemptions to your rules in untendered contracts listed, so the public can find them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do welcome the opposition doing their job and shining the light on aspects of our government that we need to look a little more closely at.

As a result of yesterday's questions, I did look more closely at the six contracts they were referring to—let's have a little clarity here—all of which were extensions of existing contracts to allow a certain project to be completed. There were extensions granted so the job could be completed. For example, the Waterloo Wellington LHIN had a project on rural health. They need a little more time to finish the project; that extension was granted.

We have clarified with the LHINs that that transition time is now over and that all new contracts and existing renewals will be going through the tough new protocols we have established.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Now we understand: The Premier's so-called new rules apply only when the Premier wants them to apply. We have seen abuse at the LHINs—these creatures are a mess—and we see again that there was no asterisk, there was no separation clause, there was no way out when the Premier made his announcement on his so-called on-again, off-again ban on untendered contracts. When we find out the LHINs have ignored this, the minister seems to just shrug it off.

Our FOI requests show that now, some \$7 million in untendered contracts has been handed out to Liberal-friendly firms through your LHINs. This has become some kind of second career program for disgraced eHealth consultants.

1040

Minister, why did you cancel the mandatory review of your LHIN? What exactly are you trying to hide?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the people at home who are watching this need to understand there are two elements to the Conservative Party's health platform. One is to freeze spending or cut spending, depending on which document you look at; the other is to abolish the local health integration networks and bring all of that decision-making back to Queen's Park. That puts them in a very strong position to close more hospitals and to decimate the health care system, to continue with the work they did when they were in office to really undermine the foundation of the health care system.

That is not our approach. Our approach is to make decisions as close to home as possible. The best decisions are those that have the buy-in of people in the com-

munities. That is the work the LHINs are doing, and I support that.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier. I hope the Premier will answer my question about the growing scandal at his regional health bureaucracies.

Speaker, you'll remember when we brought up the \$15 million that the Premier gave to the Toronto Central LHIN during the mayor of Winnipeg's by-election campaign, and you will remember the name Barry Monaghan. Barry Monaghan, Premier, as you well know, is a well-connected insider who collected \$351,000 from the Toronto Central LHIN a year after he resigned as its CEO.

Premier, are you at all concerned about the fact that Monaghan handed out an untendered consulting contract to the Belcourt Partners just months before he left the LHIN to take up a job with the Belcourt Partners? How can you justify that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to take this opportunity to object to what the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do want to take this opportunity to take a moment to talk about the calibre of the person that the member opposite chooses to once again embark on a smear campaign on. Barry Monaghan is a highly respected health care professional in this province. We in Ontario are very lucky to have his services available to improve health care for patients in this province.

Some time ago, the member opposite raised the issue of Mr. Monaghan and described him as a Liberal-friendly consultant. Indeed, when we actually looked at what party he had donated to in the past, we found that he had made a political contribution—to the Conservative Party.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the minister, and I know the minister sounds like she is a friend of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development.

Start the clock. Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know the minister wants to defend Mr. Monaghan. He may be a friend of yours, Minister, but that doesn't mean that you exempt him from the rules. The rules apply to everybody equally.

We saw that your friend Mr. Monaghan handed out \$300,000 in untendered contracts, including a deal to Jan Walker of Belcourt Partners. Previously, Jan Walker had been the chief information officer for Mr. Monaghan

when he was CEO of West Park Healthcare Centre. After Mr. Monaghan left the LHIN, Jan Walker rewarded Mr. Monaghan with a job. So here's the bottom line: Barry Monaghan handed out an untendered contract to himself.

Minister, how are you going to hold him accountable, or are you going to look the other way?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will definitely look into this situation. The rules are very, very clear. They apply to everyone. If there has been a problem, I will learn about it and we will take the appropriate steps.

Mr. Monaghan, just for the information of the people in this House, has an exemplary career in this province. Before taking on the position of CEO of the Toronto Central LHIN, he was the president and CEO of West Park Healthcare for 18 years. Before that, he was the CEO of the Orthopaedic and Arthritic Hospital for five years. He was chair of the pediatric Cardiac Care Network of Ontario and also a past chair of the Ontario stroke strategy. Under the Conservative government, Mr. Monaghan served as chair of the Cardiac Care Network for seven years. I take objection to the smearing of people who are working very—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The question is, what is the minister going to do about it? I will note that the Premier has dodged five consecutive questions on the growing rot in his LHINs. This is looking an awful lot like eHealth, where the Premier denied and dodged and handed off the tough questions to his health minister. Your failure to address these serious problems shows a growing stench at your LHINs that smells a lot like eHealth. They stood by their CEO at eHealth, Sarah Kramer, when she handed out untendered contracts to Liberal-friendly consultants, and now you're standing beside Barry Monaghan, who one-upped Sarah Kramer by handing out an untendered contract to himself.

I ask the minister, why are you stopping the review of the LHINs? Why are you sidelining the Ombudsman? Why won't you stand and fight for Ontario families and get those dollars into front-line care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are absolutely working to get dollars into front-line care. We are working very hard to integrate services so that the patients of this province get the services they need when they need them, as close to home as possible. That is what we are striving for and that is why we have put in place local health integration networks, to really help us drive that change.

Speaker, I'm sure that you and others will be interested to know that the examples that the member opposite has raised all happened before the rules were changed. There are new rules in place. The rules we inherited in 2003 were no longer acceptable; we changed them. We're enforcing them, and that's the way forward in this province.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. A report yesterday by the Toronto Board of Trade said

that this city ranks dead last in commuting times. Toronto needs investment in new light rail to help people get around the city. Instead, the Premier is threatening the Finch and Eglinton lines, the Scarborough RT and Viva bus service in York region.

My question is a simple one: How can the Premier justify a move that leaves people in some of Toronto's hardest-hit communities waiting and waiting and waiting?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question. I note with some passing interest that there's an apparent change of heart on the part of the NDP. We have invested some \$9.3 billion in public transit during the course of the past six or seven years, and on each and every occasion the NDP voted against those measures. Notwithstanding that, I welcome her support for public transit now, particularly in the GTA and in Toronto itself.

What we have decided to do, just to be perfectly clear, is we have not cut or put a stop in any permanent way to any plans for our investment in public transit in Toronto. What we have decided to do, given our economic circumstances, is to take a bit more time to make those investments. We think that's responsible and we think that's reasonable and in keeping with our circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The board of trade says that the average commuter here spends 24 minutes longer in her car than a commuter in Los Angeles, a city defined by highways and smog. That's "embarrassing," says the board of trade, who gave Toronto a D—a D—in their transportation report card. How can the Premier slam the brakes on better public transit for working women and men who were promised it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, just so we get a good sense of what we're talking about here, we put in \$9.3 billion, and if you compare that with the previous government, that's about \$9.3 billion more that we put in on our watch. I think you should also understand what we've done when we've had occasion to do so. In 2006—that was a year that the economy performed better than we anticipated, so we had about an extra \$650 million, and we decided to put that into public transit.

1050

This year, the economy is not performing as well as we would like it to. We needed to find about \$4 billion in savings. We decided not to find that in our schools, not to find that in our hospitals, but instead to merely slow down our investments in public transit. I think when Ontarians understand what we're doing and why we're doing it, they'll agree that it's reasonable and responsible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If the province wants to make this particular city a world-class city, which they often talk about, transit actually needs to be a big part of that; not just for the people who can pay for a private train to the airport, but for the working mom who actually wants to get home before dinner so she can have dinner with her kids.

Instead of replacing MoveOntario 2020 with "SlowOntario to Whenever," will the Premier keep his promises on jobs, on the environment and on the future?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I welcome my honourable colleague's belated support for public transit, especially in the city of Toronto.

I do want to assure the people of Toronto in particular, and of the greater Toronto area insofar as they're affected by these investments, that these investments will continue, but given our economic circumstances, we cannot proceed as quickly as we would have liked to. We have decided to slow these down rather than make cuts to our schools and hospitals. Those are the choices that we made. We think they're reasonable, we think they're responsible, and we believe they're in keeping with the values shared by Ontario families.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Congestion costs \$3 billion each and every year in lost productivity, and the Premier wants to somehow talk about the economy in the context of pulling \$4 billion out of this project. Transit gets people to work on time, makes shipping more efficient and creates jobs. When the Premier announced his support for Toronto transit, he said it would create 175,000 jobs. How many jobs is he killing with this wrong-headed budget plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's very clear from the work that's going on in the city right now, whether you talk about the \$874 million that's being spent on the Georgetown South corridor to support the Pearson-Union air-rail link, or the \$416 million for TTC streetcars, or the work that's being done on the Sheppard light rapid transit line right now—all of those projects are going to add to the transit infrastructure in this city.

The party opposite did not support those investments. They have not supported investments in public transit that we've made. We're going to continue to put those investments in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, there's a lot of talk going on over on the other side, but according to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities infrastructure calculator—this is an infrastructure calculator that that organization puts together—taking \$4 billion out of a transit system is going to cost 0.5% in GDP and almost 50,000 jobs. How can the Premier tell Ontario families that a plan that increases commute times, kills 50,000 jobs and hurts our competitiveness is actually good for us?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What's good for us is that we provide the public services that the people in Ontario need. So as we made our decisions regarding the budget, we had to protect those schools and protect those hospitals; we had to look for a way to slow down some of the investments that we've made.

Before we came into office, there was no investment going into public transit in the city of Toronto; there was no investment going into public transit across the province. The gas tax alone has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to municipalities around the province to allow them to grow their transit infrastructure. In Toronto, we provided \$172 million for the revitalization of Union Station. On the Sheppard East light rapid transit line we're going to extend from Don Mills to Meadowvale Road—it's on that line that the people whom the member opposite—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is that the Premier's move will have a real impact on jobs and the economy. People will wait longer to get to and from work, small businesses will struggle in a city with North America's worst gridlock, and the good jobs lost will hurt families from Toronto all the way to Thunder Bay.

Why is the Premier abandoning a commitment that families across this province were counting on?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are following through on our commitment to build public transit in the GTHA over the next five years. What we have said is we need to slow down those investments. I think the people of Ontario understand that in order to be responsible, facing a \$21-billion-plus deficit, we had to make some difficult decisions.

We are not backing off on our commitment to build public transit in the GTHA. We continue to make investments in the city of Toronto, and there will be hundreds of millions of dollars going into public transit today, next year and the year after that.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, Premier McGuinty's excuse for breaking his own law and cancelling the review of the LHINs was that his unaccountable, unelected and anonymous bureaucracies have yet to take on all of their responsibilities. But according to the home page of the Ontario local health integration networks, the LHINs took "full responsibility for health services in their communities" on April 1, 2007.

You want to fire the Ombudsman. You want to cancel the public review of the LHINs. What do you have to hide?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the opportunity to talk about the decision to delay the review of the LHINs until they have had the full mandated responsibilities.

As I said earlier today and other days, the importance of the LHINs cannot be overstated. The future of health care demands that we integrate services at the local level. We cannot continue with siloed services, where the hospitals do one thing and the community care does another

and long-term care does another without the integration that really works for the patients to smooth the transition from one level of care to another.

It's important that we take the review of the LHINs very seriously. When the legislation was passed, I think it's fair to say that we underestimated—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to point out that this is the seventh consecutive question we have asked on the LHINs that the Premier has refused to answer. Why is he letting the minister respond for his words in this House?

The LHINs say that they assumed responsibility for their full mandate three years ago. Premier McGuinty has become so tired and arrogant that he can't be bothered to get his story straight with his accomplices at the LHIN. Meanwhile, the culture of rot is spreading right across the McGuinty Liberal government.

You want to fire the Ombudsman, you want to cancel the public review of the LHINs, and you have run out of excuses.

Will you scrap your ill-conceived schemes and let Ontario patients see exactly what you're trying to hide in these bureaucracies?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Just to correct the member opposite, the LHINs have not yet assumed full responsibility for all of the aspects of care. Indeed, they get responsibility for long-term care this coming July. So that is in fact after the deadline for the review in the act.

We don't think it's in the best interests of the people to Ontario to embark on a review of an organization that has not yet taken on their full mandate. It will be an all-party review, a select committee of the Legislature, that will look at the act to determine what improvements we need to make to the act to provide the kind of integrated care we are determined to provide.

But we are continuing to work to improve the LHINs as we go along. KPMG has completed a review of the LHINs. That report is posted online. Twenty-seven recommendations—they're all being implemented.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Minister, are your projections that the Second Career program will train an additional 30,000 unemployed workers based on the old criteria for applicants or the new criteria you imposed in the fall of 2009?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very happy to respond to the question.

I'd first like to announce to the Legislature that I got news this morning that we have hit over 28,000 individuals who have benefited from Second Career.

1100

As the honourable member is aware, the success of the program, despite the criticism—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: As the honourable member knows, despite the criticisms of the opposition, the program is a great success. We hit 20,000 last fall, and we redesigned the program, promising another 8,000 spots that we've met. In the budget, the Minister of Finance indicated funding for a further 30,000 spots.

The member asked about the criteria of the program—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's why I asked a simple question: because I hoped he would be able to answer it. Instead, he avoided the whole thing.

Your projections reflect the old rules, not the new ones. We have heard from many unemployed workers over the last year, workers who invested time and energy applying to get into the Second Career program, only to be rejected and abandoned by your ministry. There is no way that 30,000 unemployed workers will be approved by the Second Career program in the next two years under the current criteria.

Are you prepared to change the qualification criteria to guarantee that 30,000 unemployed workers will be approved for the Second Career program?

Hon. John Milloy: The targets that were brought forward in the budget are based upon the existing program. That being said, we have always said to all stakeholders that we want to make sure that we get Second Career right. We continue to meet and consult with individuals to find out ways in which we can strengthen the program and ways in which we can provide training and retraining opportunities to Ontarians. I repeat again: 28,000, when that member and members of his party were standing up—and members of that party—and asking us to scrap that program.

I have met dozens and dozens of individuals in the Second Career program who tell us about the success, the way their lives have taken on new meaning because they have completed training programs and moved on to jobs. During the throne speech, we had the privilege to have Jason Boylan here, an honourable young man who, after being laid off in the auto sector, has gone and rebuilt his life at Fleming College, is moving on to a job—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Minister, our province, like many other jurisdictions around the world, has felt the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm finding it difficult—I would ask the members to remember what the member from Davenport said. Order.

Please continue.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Our province, like many other jurisdictions around the world, has felt the negative effects of the recent global economic downturn. A number of Ontario industries were hurt as a result. Production was down, and people were out of work.

Ontario's automotive sector was particularly affected by this recession. Employment in this sector fell and production lines were idle as auto companies scaled back to make up for lagging demand. The downturn in the auto sector was felt right through the supply chain as well. The auto parts sector was forced to make cutbacks in order to adjust to the dwindling demand for their products. More people lost their jobs. My Durham constituents were particularly sensitive to and impacted by this.

As our province begins to emerge from the recession, we have seen progress in a number of industries. It is for this reason that I ask the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: What is the current state of the automotive sector amidst all of this recovery?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I appreciate the question from our member from Pickering-Scarborough East, whose area has a number of people who are totally engaged in the automotive sector. Why this is especially a happy day for us is that we've had yet another good-news announcement, this time from Honda Canada. This morning, they did announce that they will be adding 400 people to their operations in Alliston. We want to congratulate them.

We know that Ontario has a very integrated automotive sector with the United States. We know that we have had a very tough couple of years in this sector. We also know that, in partnering with the government of Canada, we've been in a position to help buffer some of that pain. We know that it was far worse in the southern states compared to what Ontario suffered. Nonetheless, we are looking forward to those jobs coming back to production—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: It is encouraging to see such developments in the province's auto sector and to hear about Ontarians getting back to work. In light of this news, I'd like to take the opportunity to congratulate Honda Canada on their announcement this morning. This is definitely welcome news for the people of Ontario.

Minister, in your response you mentioned that a number of key announcements in the auto sector have been made recently that indicate there is a recovery taking place within the auto sector.

Beyond the announcements made today by Honda Canada, could the minister give this House further examples of such announcements from major auto companies that show Ontarians that our auto sector is on the mend?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: You know that today's announcement, with Honda adding 400 jobs in Alliston, increases production by 50%. We're delighted by that.

The Acura, those vehicles, are doing very well in our market and beyond.

In addition, General Motors is recalling 600 workers in Oshawa to meet demand for the Equinox. They're adding 70 more people at the CAMI plant in Ingersoll. We are delighted about that addition.

We have seen the Chrysler plant—in particular, the Windsor van plant—running flat out to meet demand. That is a very good sign. We know that people are starting to buy cars again. Thankfully, they are buying great Ontario-made vehicles.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday, and even today, your excuse for breaking the so-called tougher rules and handing out untendered contracts was because these were contract extensions for work that couldn't wait.

Minister, I don't see where in the Premier's get-tough message there is any room for that excuse. Exactly what were Beth Snyder Coaching or Batchelor and Associates doing that was so urgent that their contracts could not be put through a competitive process?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I again welcome the opportunity to talk about the nature of these contract extensions that happened after the rules were changed.

There was a period of time where it was appropriate that the work that was under way be completed. That time is over. All new contracts now are going through the rigorous procurement process that we have put in place, and that includes renewals.

I'm more than happy to talk about some of the work that was being done. The Waterloo Wellington LHIN had a rural health review under way. They need a little more time to complete that review. The Erie St. Clair LHIN had a contract to complete their integrated health services plan. That's the foundation of the LHINs' work, to bring the advice they receive on their public consultations into a document that's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Two particular contracts that I referenced earlier—our freedom-of-information records reveal that the Central LHIN handed an untendered contract to Beth Snyder Coaching and Consulting for administrative consulting. She invoiced for board meetings and a “consensus discussion on accountability.” Freedom of information also reveals that Batchelor and Associates was contracted for communication and media relations, specifically, newsletters, annual reports and brochures. Neither of these consultants improved front-line care for patients, and there's no excuse for avoiding a competitive bidding process.

You want to fire the Ombudsman and cancel the public review of LHINs. Minister, exactly what is your government trying to hide here?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Just to be clear, no one is talking about firing the Ombudsman. His term is up, and

there is an all-party process that will put a new Ombudsman in place.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Start the clock. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

As I was saying, the Ombudsman is not being fired; his contract is up. In fact, what we have done is extended it because we believe in the idea that there should actually be an opportunity for others to apply for the job. It will be an all-party committee that will decide who the next Ombudsman of this Legislature is.

When it comes to understanding the work of the LHINs, I think people understand that the LHINs' function—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I'm sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's a little late. Members, particularly from Lanark and Renfrew, need to be more respectful of this House.

New question.

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IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. This morning, Ontario's fairness commissioner released a report that shows the so-called Open Ontario is closed to many new Canadians. Skilled immigrants who come here with the promise of work in their field instead find endless roadblocks and frustration. Only one in four skilled immigrants find work in their field, and those who do find work in their field earn half what their Canadian-trained counterparts do. This is a disgrace. Will this government admit that its system is failing new Canadians?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First, I want to thank the fairness commissioner for her report that she's issuing today and the recommendations contained therein, and particularly for her commitment to this issue. Over the coming weeks, certainly my ministry and my office will carefully review this report and its recommendations, which include not only recommendations for this government but also the regulatory bodies and the assessment organizations that are responsible as well for this process, and for the federal government.

Helping newcomers succeed in our province is not only good for them, but also crucial to our economic prosperity. I should remind the member opposite that Ontario led the way: We were the first in Canada to introduce legislation, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, to ensure that the process of getting licensed in a regulated profession is transparent, fair, objective and impartial.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: It appears that this government has moved straight into damage control. Today's event

with international medical graduates is nothing more than a last-ditch effort to deflect attention from your very real failures. The commissioner's report finds that international medical graduates are the least likely to complete the Ontario licensing process: Only 18%, or one in six, do so. In August, the practice-ready assessment program closed—your ministry closed it—leaving even more IMGs without opportunity. This government talks a good line, but in reality it does nothing.

Why won't this government confront its obvious failings and commit to opening Ontario to all of our citizens?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: There's no question that all of us need to do more to help our newcomers integrate successfully, including into our workplace here in Ontario. That is what this government is doing, not only through the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, but we need to work hard and we are working hard with employers to ensure that they are providing the opportunities for our newcomers and those who are in the regulated professions, as with all newcomers.

We're working closely with our arm's-length agency and the fairness commissioner, Jean Augustine. The report that she issued today is certainly a big step in the direction to provide ourselves as well as the regulatory bodies with the information that we all need to make a difference and improve the situation. Unlike the member opposite and his party when he was in government, who did nothing to introduce a commissioner to review such practices or legislation to help newcomers, this government is serious about helping our newcomers integrate successfully.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. As the government, we have the responsibility to provide Ontario families and taxpayers fair, accountable and sustainable programs that deliver results. Importantly, we must also help people facing challenges by giving them the tools they need to get ahead.

In the recent budget, it was announced that the special diet allowance program will be eliminated. Can the minister tell us directly why the special diet allowance has been eliminated?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you to the member from Brant for his question. This government's Open Ontario plan and the poverty reduction strategy are about results. The special diet allowance was originally intended to assist our special assistance recipients with the extra costs of a special diet due to a medical condition, prescribed by and approved by health professionals.

As I have highlighted in the Legislature before, the cost under the special diet allowance went from \$6 million in 2001-02 to over \$200 million this year. Should the program have continued in its current form, the special diet allowance would have reached an expenditure of \$750 million by 2015-16. This program was no longer sustainable and was not achieving its—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the minister's response and I know there are some concerns that have been raised about this. I also appreciate the government's continued commitment to increasing social assistance, even this year, despite the economic downturn. But we must also ensure that those vulnerable in Ontario who need assistance for severe medical conditions receive the help they so desperately need.

Can the minister tell us what this government is doing to ensure that those with severe medical conditions receive the assistance they need, and what other measures is this government taking to ensure that we continue to remove those barriers that exist for those on special assistance? I need to know those answers for my constituents.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This government is committed to ensuring that those most vulnerable with severe medical conditions receive the additional assistance they require. This is why our budget announced that we will be establishing a new nutritional supplement program over the next few months to allow for a transition period that will be administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Also, we will be implementing a number of changes as a result of the recommendations from the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council. Initially, policy work will focus on exempting small payments and in-kind gifts, shortening the suspension period for non-compliance with participation requirements, clarifying the rules for disposing of assets in relation to eligibility and changing the shelter allowance calculation—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Today we find that you're asking ratepayers to pay an additional 9.6% for electricity next year. Every time you speak, it seems it's going to cost Ontario seniors and working families a lot more for basic services. This latest shock is just one in a series of ongoing increases. You're no longer nickeling and diming Ontarians to death; you are now relieving them of loonies and toonies.

Minister, when are you finally going to admit that your energy policy is strangling—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Finance will withdraw the comment he just made.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Withdrawn.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, when are you finally going to admit that your energy policies are strangling the people in Ontario who can least afford it?

Hon. Brad Duguid: One would think, as critic for energy for the number of years that this member has been critic, that he would understand the role of the Ontario Energy Board. This is an application that is before the

Ontario Energy Board. It's a very normal process to go through. It is not a 9.6% increase for all consumers. It's an increase they're applying for for their portion of the bill. That being said, it's an application. This isn't an automatic approval process. It's not unusual at all for the Ontario Energy Board to take a very good look at these increases—and often they drop them down. Sometimes they don't allow them at all. The member is absolutely jumping the gun here. I'm not sure what his motivation to do that is. But the fact is, this is not an increase; it's an application.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The minister would like to pretend that these things aren't going to happen. People out there know they're going to happen. They've been happening.

Your former colleague told us in this Legislature that—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean—Carleton will withdraw the comment. My back may be hurting, but my ears are good.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Your former colleague told us in this Legislature that the Green Energy Act would only amount to a 1% increase in energy bills per year. What a bunch of hoey. Let's look at the facts: This latest increase, together with the 8% you're going to whack people with on July 1 with the HST, double-digit increases in the distribution rates and the sneaky \$53-million increase you put through the back door last week have brought seniors, families and small businesses to the breaking point. This amounts to an over 41% increase in electricity bills in Ontario. How much more can they take of the scam you call an energy policy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I could respond in many ways to that last comment, but I think I'll refrain from doing it because I think it's important that the people of Ontario, after hearing what the member just said, understand what he's really talking about, because he clearly doesn't.

We're talking about an application that's before the Ontario Energy Board by Ontario Power Generation. It's not unusual for applications to come forward. The Ontario Energy Board has been put in place to ensure that any of these applications are looked at with regard to the interests of consumers and with regard to the future sustainability and reliability of energy in this province.

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We're going to let them do their job; that's what they're there to do. They've often looked at these applications and made decisions that roll them back or cancelled them altogether. We'll let them do their job.

The member can say what he wants; he can try to tell people information that may not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Each and every day, millions of Ontarians depend on

local transit to get to work, to their shopping, jobs, and all kinds of other things. Municipalities rely on the Ontario bus replacement program to upgrade aging buses and improve services. Now the McGuinty government is cancelling this program completely.

In Ottawa, the average age of buses is 16 years, and many buses are close to the end of their lifetimes right now. Thanks to the McGuinty government cuts, riders in Ottawa will face increased breakdowns and service interruptions.

My question is this: Why is the Premier undermining public transit by cancelling the bus replacement program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the member opposite is aware that the Ontario bus replacement program has allowed municipalities to replace a substantial percentage of their bus fleet over the last few years.

I know the member opposite is also aware that the gas tax, the two cents per litre of gas tax, flows to municipalities. In fact, although we did make a decision that we had to change the Ontario bus replacement, we've opened up the gas tax so that now municipalities can actually use that gas tax in the way that they need to, to supplement the replacement of their fleets.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I know the minister knows that municipalities are still being strangled by down-loading in this province as well, and it's not just Ottawa that's being affected by this bus replacement program cut. Thanks to this government's cuts, the city of London is going to lose half of its replacement budget for buses. Windsor riders will see \$2 million a year pulled from their transit system.

Municipalities need long-term, stable funding to plan new routes, to buy new buses and to build new garages. Will the Premier admit that it is wrong to cut a program that is so vital to transit users, and when will he reverse this very wrong-headed decision?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite asks the question about a specific program but neglects to look at the entire picture, which is that the gas tax funding is distributed to 92 transit systems in 118 communities across the province. That gas tax, that two cents on the litre of gas tax, provides hundreds of millions of dollars to municipalities to allow them to increase transit ridership. The whole point of the gas tax program was to provide funding to allow that ridership in public transit to increase.

We have changed the rules around the gas tax funding so that municipalities will be able to use that money to supplement the replacement of their fleets in the changes around the Ontario bus replacement program.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. As spring arrives,

we begin to put the winter behind us and the heating season behind us.

Northern Ontario boasts fabulous winter recreation opportunities, from skiing to snowmobiling and everything in between, but it does have a longer, colder winter.

The north has also been impacted more severely than the rest of the province by the global economic climate. Its resource, tourism and manufacturing sectors have been hit hard.

Last week's budget proposed much-needed help for individuals and families through the northern Ontario energy credit. Could the minister elaborate on that proposal?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is absolutely right: Residents of northern Ontario do have very different energy needs than those in the rest of the province. The McGuinty government recognizes that there are some very unique challenges faced by northerners. That's exactly why the 2010 Ontario budget is focused on making life better for northern residents.

The northern Ontario energy credit will undoubtedly play a part in that plan. This credit would be offered to both homeowners and renters and would allow for significant yearly savings. Families, including single parents, would save up to \$200, and individuals could see up to \$130 back in their pockets.

For 2010, about a quarter of a million families and individuals, over half of northern Ontarians, would benefit from about \$35 million in assistance.

I want to commend our northern caucus for the leadership and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'm confident that my constituents will receive this credit very well and it will no doubt make a difference in their day-to-day lives and improve the quality thereof. But there is an important group in the north that could also benefit from the energy savings; namely, industrial businesses.

During this economic downturn, jobs were hard hit in the north, with employment falling at more than twice the rate of the rest of the province. The cost of running a large industrial facility in the north is becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with, particularly when it comes to energy costs. The cornerstone of this government's new Open Ontario plan is the creation of jobs and economic growth. What is the plan to address these issues in the north, especially as they relate to direct and indirect costs of electricity?

Hon. Brad Duguid: In addition to the northern Ontario energy credit for residents, our government is introducing the northern industrial electricity rate program. It's a three-year program that would average about \$150 million in annual savings. By providing electricity price rebates of two cents per kilowatt, large northern industrial facilities will be able to reduce their electricity costs by 25%. All we ask in return in order to qualify for the credit is for these facilities to commit to an electricity efficiency and conservation plan for the future. Not only will this program help northern industry to create jobs, it

will also help protect jobs as well. Right now, what northern Ontarians need most is certainty in uncertain times.

Again, I want to thank Minister Gravelle for his leadership in coming forward with this northern Ontario growth plan. I know this new northern industrial electricity program will contribute—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. I listened with some interest to the Premier's response to questions earlier today regarding the \$4-billion cut to the Metrolinx budget. He stated very clearly that it was intentionally a slowing down of the implementation of the transportation plan. I know that the Premier agrees with all of us that the issue of gridlock is essentially important to Ontario and that we should not be slowing down in any way the plan that the province has through Metrolinx to deal with that issue.

I want to ask the Premier this: Would he not agree, rather than slowing down the funding of Metrolinx, to slow down the \$7-billion subsidy to Samsung under which there are no guarantees of jobs, under which there are no guarantees of benefits to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I gather that this is a spend question, that my colleague is in favour of us in fact elevating the level of our deficit and perhaps even requiring that we take longer to eliminate the deficit than we have planned. We can't agree with that.

I say to my honourable colleague—I know he's open to these kinds of reasonable arguments—we feel that the best thing to do in the circumstances, instead of making cuts to our schools or to our health care, is to extend the time frame to stage these projects in a way that is better suited to our economic circumstances. I think our record on public transit demonstrates our commitment to that, and what we're prepared to do, in keeping with the circumstances, is just stretch this out a little bit longer. We think that's fair and reasonable.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: I want no cuts to health care and I want no cuts to education. What I do expect from the Premier, however, is that he would prioritize his former commitment of some \$9.3 billion to Metrolinx and transportation infrastructure over subsidizing an offshore company that has no guarantees for the people of Ontario either in jobs or benefit. That's what I would ask.

Failing that, I would ask the Premier, will he at least mandate Metrolinx to pursue alternative financing arrangements so that these projects can proceed with private sector funding support, so that we don't have to slow down the infrastructure projects in the province?

1130

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There are two dimensions to this that I want to speak to. One is, it's an interesting day

in Ontario when the Conservative Party stands against a \$7-billion investment in our economy which will create 16,000 manufacturing jobs and also position our province and our economy to take advantage of a burgeoning green economy south of the border. That's something new.

Secondly, we have asked Metrolinx to take a look at these projects—the ones that we're talking about at the TTC, the ones that we're talking about extending. We're asking them for their very best advice as to how we can proceed as expeditiously as possible with these investments, being mindful of our economic circumstances today. That includes, I say to my honourable colleague, taking a look at alternative means by which we can pay for these projects.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you would know that last week and again this week I requested, on behalf of the coalition to save the closure of the refinery/metallurgical site at Xstrata, to meet with you in order to discuss possible ways to keep that facility open. You have refused to meet with that coalition. I wonder why you would say no to the mayor of Timmins, who is requesting, as a member of that coalition, to meet with you?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this question.

A few things on this: I have had an opportunity to chat with the mayor of Timmins, and I've had an opportunity to meet with some representatives from Xstrata.

My colleague and I have been exchanging notes, as recently as 30 minutes ago, on this very issue. It has been brought to my attention that there is a group of elected representatives who will be coming to Queen's Park. I want to say to my colleague what I said in my note: If that's in fact the case, I think I have an obligation to meet with that group, and I'd like to be able to arrange that, working with my colleague so we can find out who's coming and get it at a time that is, obviously, in keeping with our schedules.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Can I remind the Premier that Sudbury is on the way to Timmins? If the Premier is willing to meet with the people from Timmins, would he also be willing to meet with the people of Sudbury, more particularly about the strike between Vale Inco and USW Local 6500, to help bring both sides back to the table? Is the Premier willing to meet with the people of Sudbury?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Thank God these questions aren't three-parters; I'd be scheduling the next month here.

What I can say is, this is the first I've learned of this particular request for a meeting, and I will consider that.

I will say that our government and, I believe, every member of this Legislature is very concerned about the ongoing labour dispute in Sudbury. It has gone on for a very long period of time. It has now not only com-

promised quality of life for those who are immediately involved in this labour strike, but it's having, I think, a very serious negative effect on the community at large. If my honourable colleague has any positive suggestions on any role that we might play as a government to get the sides together and to bring about some kind of a conclusion at the earliest possible opportunity, I just want to reassure my colleague that I'm all ears in that regard.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question today for the Minister of Labour.

Minister, since 2004 your ministry has phased in six increases to the minimum wage. The seventh increase will take effect tomorrow, on March 31, when our province's minimum wage will rise to \$10.25 per hour.

When our government came into power, the minimum wage had not been raised in nine long years. In 2003, we were at the back of the pack. At midnight tonight, Ontario will have the highest minimum wage in all of Canada.

Minister, please share with this House further details on why it has been so important for this government to raise our province's minimum wage.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for the question. He's quite right; raising the minimum wage is one of the most important things we can do to raise the living standards of Ontario's lowest-income earners and their families.

This is one of the platform commitments, and I'm proud to be part of a government that is serious about poverty reduction. It's only fair that Ontario's lowest-paid workers are properly compensated for the work they do. As the government, we're working hard to raise the living standards of our most vulnerable citizens. We've taken a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy approach, which includes full-day learning, personal income tax breaks and investments in affordable housing and child care. These increase the minimum wage marks in an important step to promoting fairness—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Minister, for that response. You've said that your ministry's minimum wage policy needs to take a responsible, fair and balanced approach to assisting all Ontarians. I understand that your policy has been to slowly phase in these increases. That provides employers in the province with the time they need to prepare and to adjust for these changes from a business perspective.

Even so, Minister, some business owners and some employer organizations in the province have expressed concerns to myself and to other members about their ability to pay those higher wages, especially in these difficult economic times. Minister, how specifically are you addressing these business concerns?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question. To address the concerns, our government is

committed to supporting our businesses during these uncertain times. I'd also like to point out that when the minimum wage increases happen, so does the consumer spending on goods and services by all these Ontarians who see their wages go up, and they spend that money locally. This means that the local economy gets a much-needed boost at a time when it's most needed.

It's also important to remember that our government has recently introduced many new commitments to help our economy prosper, including cuts to business costs and taxes. These new business reforms and commitments help businesses prosper by reducing costs and increasing investments. Allowing them to pay these increased wages to hard-working Ontarians makes us all better and provides jobs and creates jobs for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Nepean—Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I was remiss at the beginning of question period, and I beg the indulgence of the House to introduce Monte McNaughton, the chamber of commerce president for Strathroy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not a point of order, and I saw the visitor come in after question period.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker: I have given your office notice of a matter of privilege I wish to raise. May I proceed?

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to expand on my letter to your office dated March 29, 2010, on this particular matter. For the benefit of those who are not aware of its contents, I will repeat some of the points that I did make to the Speaker's office in writing.

Pursuant to standing order 21(c), I provided the Speaker with the required written notice of the point of privilege I'm raising. The point relates to the breach of subsection 39(1) of the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, that was also raised during question period yesterday.

Section 39 provides that a committee of the Legislative Assembly shall begin a comprehensive review of the act no earlier than three years and no later than four years after the act received royal assent. Yet, buried deep inside the 2010 budget papers—page 164, to be exact—the McGuinty Liberals said that they would be amending the act to “provide the time necessary for a thorough review of the act and the powers available to local health integration networks.”

In other words, the Premier and Minister of Health arbitrarily decided to reschedule the comprehensive review, but that is not their prerogative. The act does not give the executive council discretion to make a call on whether to cancel or postpone the review. The act refers to royal assent only. It does not have an asterisk that says that the Premier or the government can begin a review of the act when they believe that all parts of the act are being acted on by the local health integration networks.

The power to alter the timing of the comprehensive review of the act and local health integration networks belongs to the Legislative Assembly. As of March 28, the government missed the legally mandated time for beginning the review. This show of contempt for the Legislative Assembly is a matter of public importance and I'm raising it at the earliest opportunity, as required.

Standing order 21(a) says that the House collectively and MPPs individually enjoy rights conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes or by practice, precedent, usage and custom. These rights are listed in many parliamentary manuals and precedents.

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On October 18, 1989, Speaker Fraser made a ruling on contempt that is applicable to the matter which I've raised. In the House of Commons debates, he set out that “Contempt may be an act or an omission; it does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a member, it merely has to have the tendency to produce such results,” and matters ranging from minor breaches of decorum to grave attacks against the authority of Parliament may be considered as contempts.

Speaker Stockwell of this Legislative Assembly cited Speaker Fraser's ruling in a January 22, 1997, ruling where he found a *prima facie* case of contempt was established for government advertisements. Reiterating that, “We are a parliamentary democracy, not a so-called executive democracy,” Speaker Stockwell applied the principle in finding that the actions of the government in that instance left an incorrect impression of how parliamentary democracy works.

By disregarding that the statutory requirements of the act be reviewed by a committee of the assembly by a certain time, the McGuinty government is similarly perpetuating an incorrect impression of how parliamentary democracy works. The government is already in breach of the act. Even if it was passed today, the legislation the budget alludes to comes too late. The fourth anniversary of the act was March 28, 2010.

The role of the assembly is clear. The Legislature declared its intention that this act be reviewed by no later than March 28, 2010, but the government did not respect the will of the Legislature either by beginning the review or amending the requirement in time to address the time limits stated in the act. As Speaker Fraser's precedent establishes, whether the McGuinty government's failure was deliberate or accidental does not matter.

I also refer you to the precedent of Speaker Sauvé's ruling on October 29, 1980, where she states that “while our privileges are defined, contempt of the House has no limits. When new ways are found to interfere with our proceedings, so too will the House, in appropriate cases, be able to find that a contempt of the House has occurred.”

The McGuinty government's breach of subsection 39(1) of the act is a serious and flagrant disregard for the role this assembly has in providing oversight.

The opposition has been raising concerns about how the local health integration networks created under the

act have been conducting themselves. Evidence is already mounting that shows these health bureaucracies are continuing the same practices that occurred in the eHealth Ontario scandal. A disregard for the legislative review of the act compounds the diminution of public confidence that follows once a scandal like this is revealed with a lack of confidence in how parliamentary democracy works.

It boils down to this: By defying the law and scheduling the legislative review at their own whim, this government is treating everyone as being irrelevant except for the governing party. In this government's view, people do not matter; the representatives they elect do not matter; this assembly and its long-standing traditions of jurisdiction and oversight of the executive do not matter.

Fortunately for members and the constituents we represent, the Speaker is vested with the power to protect those traditions and the oversight we provide. That protection we are seeking today. Should you rule that a *prima facie* case of contempt has been established, I am prepared to make the appropriate motions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for affording me the opportunity to speak to this matter of privilege today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, we were not given prior notice of this point of privilege. But I would respond in that the legislation before the House now, Bill 16, An Act to implement 2010 Budget measures and to enact or amend various Acts, does include a provision in schedule 16 that would—

Interjection.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Perhaps the member could be in his seat or would allow me to respond? I think we allowed your member the privilege to make her statements in this House without interruption. Thanks.

I would just point out that the section does provide that clause 39(1)(a) of the Local Health System Integration Act be repealed and replaced by—and I won't read the section—and as well that section 2 requires that this schedule come into force on March 28, 2010. So we would be providing for the enactment of that prior to the expiry of the provision that was in the previous legislation.

I will provide you, Mr. Speaker, with more fulsome comments in a written submission.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: I was disinclined to join because Ms. Elliott had done a thorough job of presenting the case, but the government House leader provoked me, first with the use of the word "fulsome." Secondly, by referencing existing legislation that repeals relevant legislation, the government is acknowledging that it's conscious of that legislation and that it intends or wishes to alter it. That, with respect, aggravates, in my submission, the government's position because it's difficult for the government to argue that it's an oversight. It's difficult for the government to argue that the provision that Ms. Elliott refers to—compelling the review—is a mere administrative one, because the

government sees it as clearly something more, something that has to be repealed. If it were a mere administrative provision, then it could be complied with or not complied with, at the whim or whimsy of the government of the day.

I listened carefully to the government House leader's response, and I appreciate that there isn't notice given, and that's perhaps another issue. But with respect, the government House leader's having pointed out to us the repeal of the relevant legislation in my view underscores the case that's made by Ms. Elliott on behalf of the Conservative caucus here today and does not in any way enhance the government's position in this regrettable scenario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity to thank the member for Whitby—Oshawa and acknowledge the receipt of her notice of raising the point of privilege. I thank the government House leader and the honourable member from Welland for their input into the point of privilege. Because this is of a complex nature, I'm going to take the opportunity to thoroughly review what has been presented and reserve my decision.

Just before we recess, I'd like to remind the members who have not received the Vimy pins provided by the member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills that they are available at the security desk in the members' lobby.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Introduction of visitors? Oh, way back there. The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craiton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like get moved back to my other seat, if you could do that.

I'm pleased to introduce two very special people who are with us today. They're both grandparents: Olga and Alex Alexander. They're in the members' gallery, sitting right here. They're here today from Whitby because I'll be introducing a private member's bill dealing with giving grandparents rights and access and visitation to their grandchildren. They have not seen their grandchildren in six years, so they're here to show their support for the bill.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PASSOVER

Mr. Peter Shurman: Today is the second day of Pesach, known more commonly as Passover. Passover begins on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Nisan and lasts for eight days.

This is a time for celebration and reflection. It is a Jewish and Samaritan holiday and festival commemor-

ating God sparing the Israelites when he killed the first-born of Egypt, and is followed by the seven-day feast of the unleavened bread commemorating the Exodus from Egypt and the liberation of the Israelites from slavery.

We get together with family and friends to join in the reading of the Haggadah, the story, and partake in the Seder. The Passover Seder, with its symbols and rituals, instructs each generation to remember their past while appreciating the beauty of freedom and the responsibility it entails.

The Haggadah is the fulfillment of the biblical obligation to recount to our children the story of the Exodus on the night of Passover. I, along with many of my constituents and all members of the Jewish community, celebrated the holiday with a Seder last night, and will be again this evening. My stomach will prove it.

From my wife, Carole, and myself, I wish everyone a happy and peaceful Pesach, or Passover. Chag Sameach.

VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It is with great pleasure that I rise today to share the names of the Celebrate 2010 award recipients in my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West. In no particular order, I'd like to name them: Paul Allen, Jake Degroot Jr., Joe DiCresce, Layton Dodge, William Dunk, Scott Fraser, Wendy Giroux, Bevet Horner, Shirley Irvine, Cheryl Langevin, Hazel Male, Tim Larry, Annette Otter, Doug Platt, Dave Sommerville, Daphne Simms, Wayne Storms and Tim Whitehead.

These outstanding citizens were presented the Celebrate 2010 award in recognition of their outstanding volunteerism in support of sports, recreation and athleticism within their communities. From baseball to hockey, from school sports to exercise classes for seniors, these are the people who make our communities click. These are the people we all turn to when we want to get things done. These are the volunteers.

Please join with me in congratulating this group of dedicated and committed people, as well as all of the selfless volunteers right here in the best province in the best country in the world.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's been seven months since the F2 tornado devastated apple orchards in the Town of the Blue Mountains, and apple growers are still waiting for the McGuinty government to put cheques in the hands of growers who are desperately looking to recover from this disaster.

In the last few weeks, I've spoken with the agriculture minister personally. I followed up on that conversation with a letter to her office addressed to her, and I've been on the phone with the deputy minister. Despite those ongoing conversations and efforts, we're still waiting for action. After seven months, the time to stop talking is now. It's time for action, and it's time for a solution.

Growers are hopeful that the AgriRecovery program will help close some of the gaps not provided by other existing programs. While we remain hopeful, we were counting on an answer to that request weeks ago. We are relying on the province and the Minister of Agriculture to push that process through with the federal government and come back with a package so that we can move on to providing assistance to apple growers.

There is some money that is supposed to flow through the Ontario disaster relief assistance program in April, but it's a drop in the bucket in terms of what these growers need. Many growers are wondering how they're even going to survive unless more assistance is announced soon.

So I'll just say to the minister and the Premier: Please, please, get moving on this file. Apple growers have paid into these programs, and they deserve an immediate and compassionate response from your government.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Bill Mauro: Declining commodity prices, the strong Canadian dollar and the global economic recession have severely affected northern industries. That's why our budget includes a commitment to further energy assistance for large industrial users in the north. We will now extend the current energy rate program for three years and enrich it as well, providing a \$20-per-megawatt-hour reduction.

Some suggest that that is too little, too late, implying that this is the first time our government has provided support to our forestry sector. Nothing could be further from the truth. Not only have we been providing energy relief to our forest companies for several years, but we've been providing relief in other areas as well, including stumpage and the construction of forestry roads, which was downloaded onto the backs of forestry companies in the early 1990s by the NDP. We've also provided significant help with capital improvements, such as the \$22-million grant to AbitibiBowater in Fort Frances for a co-generation project. And an additional \$10 million will be added to the northern Ontario heritage fund, bringing the funding to \$90 million, up from \$60 million in 2007. During the last recession in Ontario in the early 1990s, which was not as severe as this one, the NDP took the entire \$60 million out of the fund and away from northern Ontario.

Our government has recognized that people living in the north tend to pay more for energy. That's why the budget provides northern Ontarians with energy relief of up to \$130 for a single individual and up to \$200 for families. This, of course, is in addition to all of the other permanent tax relief measures announced by our government.

These measures will help to strengthen northern Ontario. If the Conservatives and the NDP are truly concerned about the north, I hope—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I stand proudly today in affirming that our government believes that strong, publicly funded schools are at the core of a competitive economy.

Investing in education is one of the most important things we can do. That is why our government has once again made a significant investment in our education system. We have increased the operating funding of school boards to over \$20 billion, an increase of nearly \$700 million over last year. Under our government, school boards have seen their operating funding increase by over 40% since 2002-03.

My riding of Ottawa Centre will benefit from an almost 5% increase in funding for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and over 3% for the Ottawa Catholic District School Board. These investments will support key areas in our education system, such as special education, transportation and school operations. But Ontarians should also know that while we are managing these expenditures in a way that protects the gains we have made in education, we are also working closely with school boards to reduce their operating costs.

These investments will help boards better meet the needs of their students. I'm proud of our government's commitment to strengthening our public education system.

VIMY RIDGE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: In a few minutes, I will introduce a private member's bill, co-sponsored by my friend Mr. Prue from Beaches-East York and my friend Mr. Zimmer from Willowdale, to proclaim April 9 as Vimy Ridge Day in Ontario.

On April 9, 1917, four Canadian divisions took Vimy Ridge back from the Germans, something the British and French had tried for four years and were unable to do. The 100,000 Canadian men followed a creeping artillery barrage, an innovative tactic that was used by both sides later in that Great War.

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The battle of Vimy Ridge should be remembered not only for the sacrifice made by 3,590 Canadian men and women who died during the battle and the 10,600 who were wounded, but also for the importance in the evolution of Canada as an independent nation. The battle of Vimy Ridge was the first time that four Canadian divisions fought together under Canadian leadership.

As there are no Canadian veterans of World War I still alive, it is more important than ever that we make a point of remembering them and the honour they brought to our country, Canada. On February 27, I joined with Lesley Lehman and a group of Kanata Sea Cadets for the launch of the Vimy pin. In order to help keep the memory of Vimy Ridge alive, the Vimy Foundation created the Vimy pin, which we unanimously agreed this morning could be worn in this chamber. I hope that all members of the legislative chamber will wear it here and elsewhere before and on April 9.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Over the last five years, northeastern Ontario has lost 15,000 net jobs. Sudbury lost 6,000 jobs in the last year alone.

I heard this government talk about how the economic problems encountered by northerners are the result of the global financial crisis. Let me tell you: People across the north, we don't buy it. The north was losing jobs long before the financial collapse.

For years, northerners have called for an industrial hydro rate to assist mills in keeping their doors open. They waited and waited. Those doors have long since been shut closed.

We have waited for the forest sector assistance fund to flow, only to find out hundreds of millions of dollars stayed at Queen's Park and never reached the north.

Finally, after all those years, the Liberal government has realized there's a problem in northern Ontario. So what do the people in northeastern Ontario get from the so-called northern budget? Well, some will get a hydro tax credit, but that will be eaten up by the hydro rate increase and the HST. Some will get a three-year temporary industrial hydro rate, but that came too late for all the mills that are already closed.

Whether I think of Gogama, Foleyet, Shining Tree, Westree, Ramsey, Biscotasing, Cartier, Estaire, Alban, Big Wood—and the list goes on and on just in my riding—people across northern Ontario communities have had their economic legs taken out from underneath them. The McGuinty government should have acted years ago.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Child care is an important service that families across Ontario depend on. Affordable, high-quality, licensed child care services allow parents to stay in the workforce and improve their family's quality of life. Our recent budget included an investment of \$63.5 million a year in permanent funding to support 8,500 child care spaces and help 1,000 child care workers keep their jobs.

Unfortunately, the federal government is no longer investing in child care in Ontario. In 2006-07, the federal government cancelled the early learning and child care agreement, which resulted in the loss of \$1.4 billion for the province. At that time, our government stepped in to fill the funding gap left by the federal government. We now will provide ongoing permanent funding to make sure that those child care spaces stay open.

This is not just good social policy; it also makes economic sense. For parents living in the highest-needs neighbourhoods, which would have been the most affected, losing the highest number of child care spaces if our government did not intervene, this initiative will help to ensure that low-income working parents continue to have access to quality child care and play an active role in the labour force.

This is great news for the parents of York South-Weston and Ontario, and I look forward to seeing the residents in my riding benefit from this investment.

PASSOVER

Mr. Mike Colle: Today I bring attention to Pesach, the Jewish holiday which is commonly known in English as Passover. This is one of the most important holidays in the Jewish calendar.

Just like the night before, tonight, members of the Judaic faith all across the world will participate in the ancient ritual of the Seder. By the way, the focal points of the Seder are eating matzo, eating bitter herbs to commemorate the bitter slavery endured by the Israelites; drinking four cups of wine or grape juice, a royal drink, to celebrate our new-found freedom; and the recitation of the Haggadah, a liturgy that describes in detail the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The Haggadah is the fulfilment of the biblical obligation to recount to our children the story of the Exodus and the night of Passover.

Pesach is a sombre occasion where the Jewish people reflect on the difficulties of their troubled history. It is also uplifting in character, bringing together family and community to appreciate the freedoms and liberties they enjoy today. It is a powerful reminder for the Jewish people of the horrors of discrimination while simultaneously providing hope that it can be overcome.

Together with all members of the assembly and our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, I want to wish all of our friends across Ontario Chag Sameach. Have a wonderful Pesach and have a wonderful Seder tonight. Chag Sameach.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on child and youth mental health agencies from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: As I've pointed out before, it's my pleasure to open the "debate" on this particular report. This report on child and youth mental health agencies comes from the Auditor General's 2008 annual report, which was delivered around December 1 of that year. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts held hearings on the report dealing with this particular subject matter in April 2009.

The report puts forward a number of recommendations primarily dealing with the concern of the committee that

all regions of the province of Ontario have similar kinds of treatments for mental health for our children. Unfortunately, mental health services in our province grew piece by piece in different communities in different ways.

The Ministry of Health has been struggling for some period of time to bring some reasoned coherence to mental health services for our children. The report makes several recommendations on how this should be done, so that the ministry will have a better idea how to allocate future resources for different communities to deal with problems in each of our communities across the province of Ontario.

The committee is concerned with the slow pace with regard to getting accountability for the services provided and ensuring that there is equalization of opportunity across all of our communities for children's mental health to be dealt with, whether it's in Windsor, Ottawa, North Bay or Thunder Bay.

We hope that this report will spur those people in the bureaucracy who are dealing with mental health to get the proper records so that we can provide better children's mental health in the future.

With that, I would adjourn the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. David Oraziatti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 235, An Act to enact the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts / *Projet de loi 235, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et modifiant d'autres lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The bill is, therefore, ordered for third reading.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the March 30, 2010, report of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

VIMY RIDGE DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DE LA BATAILLE DE VIMY

Mr. Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 19, An Act to proclaim Vimy Ridge Day / Projet de loi 19, Loi proclamant le Jour de la bataille de Vimy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Yes. Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I would like to acknowledge that Jean Thérèse Riley from the Vimy Ridge Foundation is with us here in the gallery.

As I explained to the Legislature in my member's statement, it is important that Ontarians and Canadians remember the battle of Vimy Ridge. In 2003, the Parliament of Canada passed an act recognizing this date, and I think it's now time for the Ontario Parliament to do the same.

The bill is modeled after that federal legislation, and I am encouraged to note that perhaps we have unanimous consent to pass this for second and third reading today. For that reason, I'd like to just state the two sections of the bill so each member of the Legislature understands fully what they're passing if they vote for that unanimous consent.

Section 1 identifies that April 9 in each year is to be proclaimed as Vimy Ridge Day. Section 2 of the bill states that all Canadian flags flown on the exterior of the Legislative Building and its adjoining premises shall be flown at half mast on April 9 in each year.

I'd like to thank all members of the Legislature for their support of this bill. It is truly a non-partisan matter, and I am glad that all parties and all members of the Legislature are acting in that manner.

We all honour our veterans, and I'm just so proud this day that we all recognize it.

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 20, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / Projet de loi 20, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A brief statement: Simply, this bill is meant to protect media from being further hollowed out. It protects workers in the media sector from having their work contracted out or sent offshore.

RETIREMENT HOMES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES MAISONS DE RETRAITE

Mr. Phillips moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 21, An Act to regulate retirement homes / Projet de loi 21, Loi réglementant les maisons de retraite.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister, a short statement?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE

Mr. Craitor moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 22, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act / Projet de loi 22, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Kim Craitor: This will be the fourth time I've introduced this bill into this House.

This bill is designed to assist grandparents—and there are thousands of them out there—who have been denied access to their grandchildren, denied visitation rights or even possible custody. The bill requires the courts to look at what is the best interests of a grandchild when there is an application by a grandparent to have that opportunity.

Earlier today, I introduced two grandparents who were sitting off to my right, Olga and Alex Alexander, who haven't seen their grandchildren in six years. That's what the bill is designed for, and I hope this time, after the fourth time, I can get it through.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 10 be waived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

JOHN BABCOCK

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for up to five minutes to be allotted to each party to speak on the passing of John Babcock, Canada's last World War I veteran.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I rise in the House today to pay tribute to John Babcock, Canada's last veteran of the First World War, who died just last month. At the same time, I wish to honour all the men and women who served in that conflict.

John Babcock was born in 1900 on a farm just outside Kingston, and he was humble about his place in history. He enlisted as a teenager, eager to serve his country, and he was our very last witness to what people hoped would be the war to end all wars. Now, with Mr. Babcock's passing, that war passes from living memory into the pages of history. All of us, the generations who followed those brave men and women, are now the custodians of that history, and we have a duty to perform—a duty to remember the bravery of 650,000 Canadians who served in the First World War and a duty to remember the sacrifice of the 68,000 soldiers who never came back.

En 1914, le monde était un lieu bien différent. L'ère des empires prenait fin, et de nouvelles nations atteignaient leur maturité : des nations comme le Canada.

The world was a very different place in 1914. The era of empires was ending and new nations were coming of age—nations like ours. For the people of our great nation, it was on the battlefields of the Somme, Ypres and Vimy Ridge that in a real sense, for the first time, we were not merely defined by the countries of our ancestry but by the place we called home. We became Canadians—first, foremost and forever.

In the trenches, old differences passed away and a new nation was born, one with values taught to us by our young soldiers. We became a country that fights for freedom, here and around the world. We became a country that is diverse but never divided. We became a country that is strong because, when push comes to shove, we work together, we build together, knowing deep down, we're all in this together.

Ce qui importe le plus, ce ne sont pas les terres que ces jeunes ont conquises, mais les gains qu'ils ont faits. Pas plus qu'importe ceux qu'ils ont combattus, mais plutôt les raisons qui les ont motivé à se battre.

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What endures most is not the ground those young Canadian soldiers captured over there but the gains they made for us right here, not who they fought against but who they fought for: a country we call the best in the world today because nearly 100 years ago, we gave our best to the world.

We must remember this history of ours, we must teach our children about it, and we will. It will be taught in our classrooms. It will carry on, as it has, for example, for 100 years in the cadet organizations of Canada. But above all, it will live on in how each of us daily chooses to honour and serve this great country and the foundation of freedom and democracy upon which it is built.

I want to recognize that in the gallery today we are joined by a number of cadets. I'd like to thank them for being here. I'd like to thank them for committing to the cadets.

Applause.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On April 9, as Canadians honour our victory at Vimy Ridge, the federal government will hold a ceremony to mark the end of an era and the passing of our last veteran of the Great War. While we are commemorating the end of that era by welcoming Ontarians to sign a book of reflection here at Queen's Park or online, my hope is that people across Ontario will pause, take just a brief moment from their busy lives and give thanks for the freedom and peace we enjoy today. In the immortal words of the English poet Laurence Binyon:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I would like to begin by reading a poem entitled *A Soldier Died Today* by Second World War RCAF veteran Lawrence Vaincourt:

He was getting old and paunchy and his hair was falling fast.
He sat around the Legion, telling stories of the past.
Of the war that he had fought and the deeds that he had done,
Of the exploits with his buddies; they are heroes, every one.

Tho' sometimes to his neighbours his tales became a joke,
His Legion buddies listened; they knew whereof he spoke.
But we'll hear his tales no longer; he has passed away.
The world is much poorer now; a soldier died today.

He will not be mourned by many, just his children and his wife.
For he lived an ordinary, uneventful, quiet life,
Held a job, raised a family and quietly went his way;
The world won't note his passing, tho' a soldier died today.

When statesmen leave this earth, their bodies lie in state.
Thousands note their passing and proclaim that they were great.
Papers tell their stories, from the time that they were young.
The passing of a soldier tho', goes unnoticed and unsung.

It's so easy to forget them, it was so long ago,
When our young men left for battle, but this we should know.
It was not the politicians with their promises and ploys
Who won for us the freedom that our country now enjoys.

Should you find yourself in danger, with enemies at hand,
Would you want a diplomat with his every shifting stand?
Or would you prefer a soldier, who has sworn he will defend
His home, his kin, his country; he'll fight until the end?

He was just a common soldier and his ranks are growing thin,
But his presence should remind us; we may need his likes again.
For when countries are in conflict, then we find the soldiers' part
Is to clean up all the troubles that the bureaucrats did start.

If we cannot do him honour while he's here to hear the praise,
Then at least let us give him homage at the ending of his days.
Perhaps just a simple headline in a paper that would say:
Our country is in mourning, for a soldier died today.

John Babcock won no medals for the great feats of World War I. He was not in the trenches of Passchendaele, he did not storm Vimy Ridge and he did not die in battle to lie in Flanders fields. He was only one of 650,000 men and women who served the Dominion. Still, that farm boy from rural Ontario, who enlisted at 16 years old to, from the words of another poem, "take up our quarrel with the foe," holds another honour and distinction no other man, woman or child can claim. He was our last son of the First World War, the Great War, the horrible conflict, the war to end all wars, where Canada became a nation.

In the words of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, "His family mourns the passing of a great man. Canada mourns the passing of the generation that asserted our independence on the world stage and established our

international reputation as an unwavering champion of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law."

But as we pay John Babcock honour, we should not forget that while he was Canada's last veteran of the First World War, he is not our last veteran and not the last soldier this country has asked to take up arms to defend democracy, freedom and the rights we enjoy as a nation. Every time a soldier's body is carried down the Highway of Heroes, we should remember that they do not die for the glory of war; rather, they fought for the majesty of our nation. We should respect our veterans and give credence to their deeds in life, not just in death. Every soldier, whether it be John Babcock, my own father or so many of his generation who took up arms and those who continue to take up arms in defence of our nation today, deserves our respect and our thanks.

As a 16-year-old, John Babcock left the family farm to join the Canadian Expeditionary Force in Sydenham, Ontario. When they discovered his age, he was relegated to a training battalion and forced to wait until he was old enough to fight. The armistice came before that could happen, a few months short of his 18th birthday. Later in life, he expressed regrets at being a "tin soldier," a World War I veteran who never saw combat, saying he was willing to fight and, if need be, die on the fields of Belgium and France. True to that word, during the Second World War he fought on the side of the United States, his adopted country, where he was forced to give up his Canadian citizenship when he was naturalized in 1946.

He regained his citizenship in 2008, and during one of the last interviews he gave from his home in Spokane, Washington, he said, "I think it would be nice if all the different people in the world could get along together so we weren't having wars. I don't suppose that'll ever happen, though."

Sadly, John, you were probably right. But those of us who are elected to assemblies, Parliaments and councils across Canada will strive every day to promote freedom, democracy and justice. Our goal is to show that, more and more, our nation can be a beacon of light in the world—a world that endeavours to end wars. But when tyranny rears its ugly head, we will turn to soldiers like John Babcock to stand on guard for our nation and honour them by saying we shall not break faith with you and we shall not forget.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We in this House bear a distinct responsibility to honour the legacy of John Babcock and the 650,000 Canadian men and women who served our country in the First World War. Our remembrance in this chamber must remind us that speaking freely, assembling as we wish, speaking with one voice when we agree and having the liberty to voice opposition when we don't is indeed enshrined as a right, but a right that came to exist solely as a product of the selflessness and sacrifice of an entire generation of Canadians.

John Babcock did not see battle, but his legacy, in particular his enlisting at an age when our children today are first earning their driver licences at, persuades us to

recall an entire generation of Canadians who gave freely of themselves so that we could enjoy the liberties and freedoms that allow us to meet in this House here today.

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John Babcock was our country's last living connection to a truly remarkable generation, a generation that sent an unimaginable 650,000 of its own into battle during the Great War. The enormity of the sacrifice of those 650,000 brave Canadians is especially astonishing when we recall that Canada's population during World War I was not even one quarter of what it is today. Canada's war effort consumed an entire nation and profoundly shaped the course of the history that continues to shape us all.

John Babcock's embodiment of the selfless sacrifice that defined his generation endured even until the time of his death at the age of 109. Four years ago, after parliamentarians voted unanimously to sponsor a state funeral for Mr. Babcock, he respectfully declined. He was concerned that such attention would overshadow the contributions made by the many others who had served.

It is our collective responsibility and obligation to ensure that the type of humility, selflessness, courage and principle that defined Mr. Babcock's generation is never forgotten. We must embrace the passing of John Babcock not simply as an occasion marked by sadness but also as a reminder of the responsibility we share, a responsibility not just to remember but to commit ourselves to the ideals that the Canadians of his generation upheld—in particular, an enduring plea for peace.

Canada's war veterans returned as our country's finest ambassadors for peace. The passing of John Babcock reminds us that as that time moves forward, those voices for peace become fewer. Of the 650,000 Canadians who served in the First World War, there are now no living voices at all. The number of living Canadians who served in the Second World War and in Korea grows smaller with every passing day.

We have both the responsibility and also the privilege of ensuring that the voices of those who fought for our freedoms can continue to have deep resonance both today and in the future. We must not forget that there are Canadians fighting in conflicts still today and never surrender our gratitude that we may continue to live peacefully here at home. The march toward peace must be continuous and ever renewed. Let those of us with the liberty to assemble and speak freely commit ourselves again to standing up for the freedoms that so many lost their lives defending.

I encourage all Ontarians and all members of this House to add their voices to the books of reflection on display at both Queen's Park and Rideau Hall. These important books of reflection mark the end of an era, but more importantly, they signify a collective pledge never to forget.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, we would request a moment of silence for the passing of John Babcock, Canada's last World War I veteran, and all of our World War I veterans.

The House observed a moment's silence.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe it's timely and I believe that we have unanimous consent regarding the Vimy Ridge Day Act, 2010.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the orders for second and third reading of Bill 19, An Act to proclaim Vimy Ridge Day, shall be called immediately and that the Speaker shall put the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bill forthwith, without debate or amendment, and that in the case of any division, the bells be limited to five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does everyone understand the motion? Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

VIMY RIDGE DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DE LA BATAILLE DE VIMY

Mr. Sterling moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to proclaim Vimy Ridge Day / Projet de loi 19, Loi proclamant le Jour de la bataille de Vimy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

VIMY RIDGE DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DE LA BATAILLE DE VIMY

Mr. Sterling moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to proclaim Vimy Ridge Day / Projet de loi 19, Loi proclamant le Jour de la bataille de Vimy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I would remind members that the book of remembrance is in the lobby downstairs for your signatures, if you so choose.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

RETIREMENT HOMES

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Today I have the great pleasure and privilege to introduce, for the first time in Ontario, legislation that would provide strong protections for seniors living in retirement homes.

The proposed Retirement Homes Act is about more than just stronger protections; it's about deeply held values we often take for granted, values like respect, dignity, independence and the freedom to make our own decisions. It's also about peace of mind for seniors and for their families.

Many of us in this room today know a senior who is living in a retirement home. They could be a mother, a grandfather, a sister or a dear friend. There are approximately 40,000 seniors who live in approximately 700 retirement homes across this province.

Many retirement homes do their very best to give their residents the comfort of knowing that they're living in a safe environment. Other retirement home residents are not so lucky. Imagine not having the information you need to make decisions about your own care. Imagine not having any recourse for making your home better and no one to talk to when your rights are not respected. This is the reality for some retirement home residents in Ontario.

But today, we're taking action to change all that. The time is right to do this. So we have talked to seniors, retirement home operators and government partners about how we can come up with a retirement homes strategy that puts our seniors first and helps ensure the viability of an industry that is poised for growth.

Several of my colleagues dedicated long hours and hard work to this proposed legislation. I would hope that you would allow me to recognize Aileen Carroll, the member for Barrie, who did a lot of the work that allows me to stand here. I might also point out the dedicated staff at the seniors' secretariat, who care deeply about this and worked very hard on this legislation. If it were not for their efforts, I wouldn't be standing here today.

I also want to recognize some important people here in the members' gallery today: Gord White, the CEO of the Ontario Retirement Communities Association; and Donna Rubin, the CEO of the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors. Donna and Gord, thank you very much for being here. They are all part of a collective effort to provide stronger protection to retirement home residents.

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In order to ensure these protections, the proposed Retirement Homes Act will, if passed, create a third party authority. The authority would be responsible for creating a public registry that lists all homes across the province, the services they provide and the inspection results. It would be responsible for inspecting retirement homes to make sure they meet care and safety requirements, responsible for penalizing homes that do not comply with orders and responsible for revoking the licences of homes if necessary.

We believe all homes across the province should have to meet consistent care and safety standards. The proposed act, therefore, requires all retirement homes to have emergency plans and infection control and prevention programs, to meet standards for initial and ongoing assessment of residents' care needs and care planning, and to conduct police background checks and training for staff.

Finally, the proposed Retirement Homes Act would ensure that all retirement home residents would have:

- the right to all the information they need to make an informed choice about their care and accommodation;

- the right to know the true cost of the services they are receiving;

- the right to know in plain, clear language the terms and conditions of their accommodation and care;

- the right to be able to access or purchase the same sort of care services that they would be able to get if they were living in their own homes;

- the right to know about staffing levels and that the staff have been trained on safety and evacuation procedures;

- the right to make complaints about the care and safety standards of the home to an arm's-length body;

- the right to live in a safe and clean environment where residents are treated with courtesy and respect; and

- protection from abuse and neglect.

This legislation would, if passed, be one of the most important things we can do for our seniors in our province. It's the respectful thing to do; it's the right thing to do. Society demands this of us, and our seniors deserve no less.

YOUTH SCIENCE MONTH

MOIS DU FESTIVAL SCIENCES JEUNESSE

Hon. John Milloy: March is Youth Science Month in Canada, and I stand here today, actually, in my capacity as Minister of Research and Innovation. It's with great pride that I rise to ask all sides of the House to join me in celebrating the achievements, the curiosity and the promise of Ontario's young people who are involved in the sciences.

We're very honoured to have a number of leaders in the field of youth science here with us today at Queen's Park, including from Let's Talk Science, Dr. Bonnie Schmidt; from Youth Science Canada, Reni Barlow and Sharon Gregory; from Bioscience Education Canada, Dr. Alison Symington, Jeff Graham and Rick Levick; and from Youth Science Ontario, Carolyn Rayfield. We welcome them here and thank them for their leadership in this important field.

Every year, over 500,000 young Canadians participate in project-based science. That's as many as play minor hockey or about the population of Hamilton. This month, youth from across our province have been showcasing their work at science fairs, such as the 50th Bay Area Science and Engineering Fair and the Windsor regional fair, both of which took place just a few days ago. These young people have been competing to earn a coveted spot at the Canada-Wide Science Fair, which will be hosted in Peterborough this May.

Ontario students also get to showcase their immense talent at the international level. Next week, for example, I will be speaking at the Sanofi-Aventis BioTalent Challenge awards ceremony. This event is one of Ontario's

premier youth science mentorship programs, and Canadian winners move on to an international biotechnology competition in Chicago this May.

Les temps sont durs en matière d'économie—c'est indiscutable. Mais nous nous trouvons à un moment décisif de notre histoire, un moment où nous avons l'occasion de prendre une longueur d'avance en créant des approches, des technologies et des solutions scientifiques face aux problèmes du 21^e siècle.

Ce sont nos jeunes, la prochaine génération de scientifiques et d'entrepreneurs innovateurs, qui, en prenant des risques, nous hisseront à des niveaux que nous n'aurions jamais pu imaginer.

Former UN Secretary-General and Nobel Peace Prize winner Kofi Annan once said, "Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation.... Empowered, they can be key agents for development." He was right, and Ontario is committed to supporting and inspiring our youth so that they become the drivers of innovation in our province and all around the world.

Young people like Erik Yao: Erik was a high school student from Hamilton who won a Canada-Wide Science Fair award and went on to participate in one of Ontario's youth programs. Before this, he was unsure of his career aspirations. But now, after getting the opportunity to work alongside leading Ontario immunology researchers, Erik is pursuing an education in medical science.

Since 2005, the Ministry of Research and Innovation has invested over \$5 million to support science outreach projects which have sparked the scientific curiosity of more than 156,000 youth across the province—young people like Erik.

In addition, our government was proud to support the work of Youth Science Canada and Let's Talk Science with an investment of \$5 million in 2008. These amazing organizations are supporting science and technology education in remote and aboriginal communities, enabling Ontario youth to participate in science fairs and championing more young people to advance to national and international competitions. Let's Talk Science is even reaching out to children between six months and six years old with their Wings of Discovery science program. This program recognizes that during the early years children are asking the questions and acquiring the knowledge and attitudes that will drive their curiosity and cognitive development in the future. Like Let's Talk Science, in Ontario we have our eye on the future.

Si nous voulons que l'Ontario devienne un chef de file économique, nous savons qu'il nous faut être chef de file en matière d'éducation. Pour affronter la concurrence mondiale, il nous faut une population active très instruite et hautement spécialisée.

By moving ahead with full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds and strengthening Ontario's colleges and universities, our new five-year Open Ontario plan is laying the foundation for the powerful and productive workforce of tomorrow. We are laying the foundation for tomorrow's leaders, for tomorrow's scientists and engineers, entrepreneurs and innovators. We are laying

the foundation for students like Erik, who will be finding the solutions to global challenges like climate change and water scarcity and the fight against diseases like cancer.

With our support, there is no doubt that Ontario's youth will succeed, and when our kids win, we all win.

RETIREMENT HOMES

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: My comments are directed to the retirement homes bill. The McGuinty government's plan to regulate retirement homes does not go far enough to meet the real needs of Ontario's seniors. What Ontario's seniors really need are more long-term-care beds funded by this government.

This government has basically stopped construction of new long-term-care facilities for six years, and my fear is that by regulating retirement homes, seniors will be moved from hospitals to these homes, where the level of care they require may not be available. This has already happened in Waterloo region.

Our province is in desperate need of long-term-care beds to accommodate the many senior citizens being cared for in hospitals. In Cambridge Memorial Hospital, an estimated 35 beds are occupied by patients waiting for a bed at a long-term-care facility, and this situation exists across our province.

Regulating retirement homes may be a good idea, but it totally ignores the real problem and is the cheap way of getting patients out of hospitals. There are better ways to save money than privatizing our health care system. This privatization creates a dangerous situation and could put the safety and well-being of seniors at risk.

I'm sharing my time with my colleague and friend Jim Wilson, the member for Simcoe-Grey, who will speak in response to the Minister of Research and Innovation.

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I want to congratulate my colleague, who started Youth Science Month in Ontario and who, as Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, launched the programs that the minister was talking about today.

YOUTH SCIENCE MONTH

Mr. Jim Wilson: In response to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, I too want to join with all members of this House in saluting Youth Science Month.

As my wonderful colleague from Cambridge said, during my time as Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, we started many of the programs that mirror what the minister just talked about. Our efforts were focused on getting young people interested in science from grade school to high school to college and university.

We had to pick up the slack back in the mid-1990s because, as the minister would know as a former assistant to Jean Chrétien, the federal Liberals had cut all the funding for science fairs across the country and, in particular, Ontario. So we picked up the ball and worked

with Sci-Tech Ontario to promote science among young people and to re-establish funding for science fairs across the province.

I remember we bought wonderful jackets, in co-sponsorship with the drug company Pfizer, for the best and brightest students, and sponsored their travel and accommodation to attend Ontario science fairs and later the Canada-Wide Science Fair.

As science and technology minister, I travelled to Timmins for the Canadian championship. I have to say that it was like attending the Olympics for science. I remember being so proud to watch the Ontario team come onto the floor. I understand that's in Peterborough this year.

Another thing I really enjoyed was the launch of Engineering Week every year, sponsored by Professional Engineers Ontario. If there's one thing I miss, it's the interaction that I had as minister with those very bright engineers in training.

The one other thing I'll mention is a project we did with NASA called Tomatosphere. We teamed up with NASA to allow students to do a science experiment to see how tomatoes grew in zero gravity as compared to those grown in classrooms across Ontario. We had almost 100% participation of grade school students across Ontario. To this day, I still have the posters that were signed by all of the students at Thor prep school in Thornton and Byng Public School in Stayner. Those posters actually went up into space on the space shuttle and were brought back down, and they're still hanging in my office here at Queen's Park.

In closing, I just want to say congratulations to all of the students participating in Youth Science Month. Your innovation, know-how and excitement have always been an inspiration to me and my caucus. Spending time with these very bright young people has certainly been a highlight of my career and, I know, the highlight of many of those in my House.

Just in case you're all wondering whatever happened to Tomatosphere, the plants that started growing on the space station actually did grow a little taller than those tomatoes that were grown in the classrooms.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I know the greenhouse growers in Leamington-Kingsville would be interested in that. Responses?

RETIREMENT HOMES

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to respond to the seniors' bill. There are some good things in this bill. I'm happy to see that there have been some administrative changes, and I'm happy to see that there's going to be some more monitoring and scrutiny and accountability. I'm happy about that, but in the bill, part I mentions safety, part IV mentions safety and part V allows for inspectors to enter the homes to inspect. Needless to say, I'm a little disappointed to see nothing on sprinkler systems.

This is from the Ontario Retirement Communities Association, which, on many different pages on building amenities, suite amenities, have asked for fire and smoke

alarms and also sprinkler systems individually. Also, the fire chiefs of Ontario have recommended this on more than one occasion, on different disasters that happened in our province.

Last September, I talked about a sprinkler system in every retirement home and a sprinkler system in every suite. I tried to put it in perspective to this government. I reminded them of their spending on eHealth, consulting fees, and wild personal spending on Ontario agencies, boards and commissions. However, when sprinkler systems in retirement homes should have been their priority, the very basic requirement for each and every retirement home in Ontario was absent.

This government needs to finally step up to the plate for seniors and ensure the funding for retirement homes in Ontario be fully equipped with operational sprinkler systems. I'm sure that when I read this legislation there will be no significant mention, let alone direction, for fire sprinkler safety in retirement homes.

Our most vulnerable citizens have every right to expect their government ensure their safety as they live away from their families while trying to maintain their independence during their twilight years. Those fire victims should have been able to depend on appropriate government legislation and support to the industry so their lives would have been saved.

They have the support of the firefighters of Ontario and the fire chiefs, particularly those who were on scene at the horrific retirement home fires that unnecessarily took away mothers, fathers and grandparents from their families.

Although the Liberal government has likely missed the boat with this legislation, there is still time to do the right thing, to enact legislation and provide financial support for programs that will ensure fire sprinkler safety for all those living in all retirement homes in our province.

RETIREMENT HOMES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is also my pleasure to talk about the retirement home legislation that was tabled in this House today. New Democrats have long called for a regulatory system for retirement homes, a system that, as my colleagues have mentioned, would include mandatory sprinkler systems in all of the homes, a system that protects the rights of vulnerable residents of retirement homes and a system that would prevent severely ill patients from being placed in a home that is unable to properly care for them.

Since I was elected in 2007, I have risen in this House and asked numerous times when this regulation was coming. I was told numerous times that the regulation was on its way and that I would be happy when it came. Today, I guess the wait is over: The bill has been tabled.

From what I have heard so far, there are some good things in the bill. Vulnerable Ontarians living in retirement homes have waited far too long for the regulations that are presently tabled today. While the government kind of dawdled, elderly Ontarians have been put at risk, and in some cases actually tragically died.

Seniors who have to be in retirement homes are often left without adequate medical care, without safeguards in place to prevent abuse, without enforcement of any regulations and without continuity of care. Today, with the tabling of this bill, should be the day when all of this changes, but allow me to be a little bit concerned that that won't be the case. In 2007, when the public consultations were carried out, the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly's submission to the consultation process warned that this government was not getting it right in its questions, that it was not getting it right with its definitions, and that the regulatory models that they were considering were not the right ones.

I certainly hope that they have listened to them and that we will be satisfied with what's in the bill. I have waited a long time. I hope I will be happy.

PETITIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas several paramedics in Simcoe county had their pensions affected when paramedic services were transferred to the county of Simcoe, as their pensions were not transferred with them" from the hospitals of Ontario pension plan and OPSEU trust plan "to OMERS, meaning they will receive significantly reduced pensions because their transfer did not recognize their years of credited service; and

"Whereas when these paramedics started with their new employer, the county of Simcoe, their past pensionable years were not recognized because of existing pension legislation; and

"Whereas the government's own Expert Commission on Pensions has recommended that government move swiftly to address this issue; and

"Whereas the government should recognize this issue as a technicality and not penalize hard-working paramedics;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier McGuinty support Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's resolution that calls upon the government to address this issue immediately and ensure that any legislation or regulation allows paramedics in Simcoe county who were affected by the divestment of paramedic services in the 1990s and beyond to transfer their pensions" from the hospitals of Ontario pension plan and OPSEU pension plan trust to OMERS.

I'm happy to note that the government has introduced legislation to respond to my resolution, so I will sign this petition.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France G  linas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

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"Whereas" since "October 2009, insured PET scans" are being "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks with page Ben.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas we currently have no psychiatric emergency service at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to support the creation of a psychiatric emergency service in emergency at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario."

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I am pleased to present a petition in the limited time allowed for petitions. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

"Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

"Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies' decisions; and

"Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the members of the provincial Parliament of Ontario to enact legislation in support of the Ombudsman of Ontario to have the power to probe decisions and

investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies (CAS)."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents of the riding of Durham and give it to Catia.

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mr. Rick Johnson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the health of the First Nations youth in Ontario is of growing concern;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To continue the partnership with the Right To Play partnership with the Moose Cree First Nation;

"To expand the Right To Play program to other First Nations communities; and

"To follow up these programs to ensure that other initiatives continue to promote the health of First Nations youth in Ontario."

I agree with this petition, sign it and will turn it over to page Jameson.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Steve Clark: This is a petition from Leeds-Grenville, from a rally yesterday. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government created the local health integration networks; and

"Whereas the mandate of the LHINs includes providing funding to a hospital; and

"Whereas Brockville General Hospital's deficit of \$2 million has resulted in the hospital cutting the equivalent of 17 full-time staff members and shutting down 15 acute care medical surgical beds; and

"Whereas other Ontario hospitals have been successful in receiving increases in base funding to help preserve front-line health care jobs and services; and

"Whereas the job loss will impact the local economy and the closure of 10% of hospital beds is an enormous loss for a small community;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government sufficiently fund the South East LHIN and the Brockville General Hospital to ensure that Brockville and area residents have full access to all hospital services to which they are rightfully entitled."

I certainly agree. I will affix my signature and pass to it page Catia.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario in the form of postcards. On the postcards, people wrote things like, "shameful," "hear-

tless," "frightening," "disgusting," "frustrated," "sad," "rural discrimination," but the petition reads as follows:

"The Ontario government promised no cuts to health care during the recession. Now a proposal for a funding increase threatens to cut our hospitals—a cut that won't heal. H1N1 has already increased demand on our hospitals, the costs of drugs and diagnostic equipment are constantly rising, and every day our hospitals are being asked to do more with less. A 1.5% funding increase will create a care deficit for our patients. It will also undo efforts to reduce wait times, return health professionals into the system and provide better access to services, efforts that have already cost millions of dollars. Turning the clock back wastes these investments."

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Please do not fight the recession on the backs of our public hospitals. Our hospitals need to be funded based on our communities' needs."

Those come from all over the province. I will affix my name to it and send them to the table with page Harsh.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: A petition from Etobicoke Centre:

"Whereas, in the 2006 budget, the McGuinty government allocated \$63.5 million for child care for each of the next four years. Each year since, \$63.5 million went to support our vital child care services;

"Whereas, if the province does not continue this funding in the 2010 provincial budget, municipalities will have no option but to make dramatic cuts to child care subsidies, destabilizing the entire system;

"Therefore, be it resolved that in the 2010 budget we call on Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan to:

"(1) Ensure the province provides sufficient funding to maintain existing levels of child care service, and recognize cost-of-living and other legitimate increases in operating costs; and

"(2) Provide all necessary tools to support the transition to an early learning program, including base funding for child care programs to support operations and wages comparable to the full-day learning program, in order to ensure the child care system remains stable and sustainable."

I shall affix my name to this and give this to Anne-Marie.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, tele-

phone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to" houses "over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals ... funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I'll give it to Jameson.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Glen R. Murray: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we never want to see another tragedy like Walkerton ever again. The health and safety of Ontarians can never come second to profit and greed. Clean, safe drinking water is a right" of all Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the" Legislature "of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to upgrade our current water filtration system;

"To continue to monitor and test our water systems;

"To continue to strengthen Ontario's trust in the safety of our drinking water;

"To continue to invest in new systems and personnel to monitor and test our water;

"To never forget the mistakes of the past and always hold our water supply to the highest standards;

"To continue to invest in the health and safety of Ontarians through our water supply."

I will sign this petition and give it to page Catia.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Petitions? The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Thank you, Speaker; that's very kind of you.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas early childhood learning is a fundamental program in the development and education of Ontario's youth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to expand full-day learning across the province;

"To continue to make our children a priority for this government;

"To continue investments in the infrastructure of our education system;

"To continue to support Ontario's families through these initiatives; and

"To never go back to the days of forgotten children and mismanagement of schools we saw in the 1990s. We applaud the new investments in full-day learning and look forward to their continued growth across the province."

I endorse this petition myself.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's plan to blend the PST with the GST into one 13% harmonized sales tax represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

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"This new tax, which we are calling the DST ... will raise the cost of a long list of goods and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax, including" but not excepting "electricity; home heating oil and gas at the pump; haircuts; newspapers and magazines; Internet and cable; home renovations; heating; air-conditioning repairs; accounting, legal and real estate fees; condo fees; new home sales; rents will also go up; minor hockey registration fees will increase; and green fees and gym fees will also be taxed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government not impose this new tax on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I agree with it, I'll sign my name and send it down with Colin.

TAXATION

Mr. Pat Hoy: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a duplicated tax system puts our businesses at a disadvantage by increasing the costs of doing business; and

"Whereas a single, unified tax system reduces the burden on businesses by removing the provincial sales tax on goods and reducing administrative costs; and

"Whereas both Conservative and Liberal members of the provincial and federal Legislatures have voiced their support of a single sales tax; and

"Whereas local chambers of commerce, economists and experts are also supporting the move to a single tax system; and

"Whereas the recent RBC Economics report found that the HST is improving the competitiveness of Ontario businesses by lowering the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

"Whereas a harmonized sales tax is expected to create jobs for Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government of Ontario's plan to implement the HST and other tax reforms to benefit Ontario businesses and consumers."

I too have signed the petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition which reads:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% combined GST will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, ... gas ... , home heating" and it goes on and on; I'll just read the end of it.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the proposed tax harmonization, especially in light of the current economic uncertainty."

As I agree, I'll sign it.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Jeff Leal: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas early childhood learning is a fundamental program in the development and education of Ontario's youth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To continue to expand full-day learning across the province;

"To continue to make our children a priority for this government;

"To continue investments in the infrastructure of our education system;

"To continue to support Ontario's families through these initiatives; and

"To never go back to the days of forgotten children and mismanagement of schools we saw in the 1990s. We applaud the new investments in full-day learning and look forward to their continued growth across the province."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Mathilda.

OPPOSITION DAY

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call on the Premier of Ontario to adopt the principle that if you do not lose your job, you do not collect severance, and cancel severance payments to HST tax collectors who keep their jobs. This is addressed to the Premier of Ontario.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to this motion that our Ontario PC caucus has brought forward. This motion

is in keeping with our commitment to use all of the legislative tools at our disposal to put a stop to the inexcusable payout of \$25 million in severance to HST tax collectors, none of whom will be missing a single day on the job.

As members know, in every other jurisdiction on the planet severance is defined as a payment to someone when they actually lose their job. You don't need to go to the legislative library to learn this fact; it just makes good plain sense. In fact, only in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario is severance defined as the payout you get when you change your business cards, as the HST tax collectors are doing in moving from the provincial to the federal payroll.

We believe that Dalton McGuinty missed an opportunity in this year's budget to present Ontario families with this gesture of good faith that his government has learned from its past mistakes and is finally prepared to treat Ontario families' tax dollars with the respect they deserve. But sadly, they missed this opportunity.

The \$25 million in severance is in fact symbolic of a larger problem we see in the approach of this budget and the approach of the McGuinty government as a whole. It has become symbolic of the lack of respect the government continues to show for how hard Ontario families work to put food on the table and the sacrifices that they make each and every day to balance the family budget. It is symbolic of an approach to government where promises of action to reign in spending just cannot be taken seriously.

The 2010 budget confirms that Ontario's deficit is actually larger than all the other provinces' combined. The 2010 budget confirms that Dalton McGuinty's government is on course to double the provincial debt by 2012. They are on course to mortgaging the future of our children and grandchildren, and this needs to come to an end today.

A forward-thinking government would clearly see this situation and realize that a change in direction is desperately needed. But with this so-called severance deal, it is sadly business as usual in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. He didn't even raise a finger to challenge this, didn't try any kind of appeal mechanism under the agreement. Taxpayers across Ontario, from Northumberland to Perth-Wellington to Peterborough, were shocked to find out that Dalton McGuinty will pay up to \$25 million in severance packages to 1,200 provincial tax collectors even though they don't miss a single day on the job and the vast majority of them are actually getting pay increases. They will now be employed with the federal government to collect Dalton McGuinty's \$3-billion HST tax grab. This is not acceptable to me, it's not acceptable to the PC caucus and it is not acceptable to hard-working families in the province of Ontario.

I am confident that all members would agree the principle here is simple: If you don't lose your job, you do not collect severance from the taxpayers in the province of Ontario. It is as simple as that. Every other jurisdiction follows that pattern. British Columbia is

following that pattern. As we all know, BC signed an agreement to harmonize its sales tax, it signed an agreement to transfer provincial tax collectors to the Canada Revenue Agency, but its public employees, the HST tax collectors in British Columbia, are not receiving the severance payouts that Dalton McGuinty's tax collectors are.

All Ontario families are asking for is for Dalton McGuinty to do the right thing. There are so many better uses for that \$25 million in severance than this sweetheart deal for Dalton McGuinty's HST tax collectors, who don't miss a day on the job and in fact are getting a pay raise.

When you're laying off nurses in the province of Ontario, when special-needs children cannot get the services they need in our classrooms, when Dalton McGuinty is closing down ERs in communities like Fort Erie and Port Colborne, it is absolutely wrong to hand out \$25 million to his HST collectors.

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Now, what has Dalton McGuinty told us when we confronted him here in the Legislature with this unconscionable waste of taxpayer dollars? Well, he tells us that his hands are tied. But if the Premier had even the slightest sincere interest in protecting Ontario families against this unwarranted, unjustified severance payout, he had every opportunity to do so. He could have specifically addressed this in the collective bargaining agreement his government signed in 2006. He could have addressed it in the collective bargaining agreement he signed in 2009. He could have addressed it in the comprehensive integrated tax coordination agreement that he signed just last year. He could have addressed it in the HST legislation he introduced last winter. He could have addressed it in the human resource agreement, the transfer of staff to the CRA. To my count, that's five different occasions when Dalton McGuinty could have stood up for Ontario families, and five times he failed to do so. This stops now, today.

So if Dalton McGuinty claims that his hands are tied, despite passing on an appeal, despite five occasions to change this, the Ontario PC caucus is more than happy to untie Dalton McGuinty's hands and do the right thing and save that \$25 million for priority services.

That is why, in addition to this motion, we will introduce a budget bill amendment that will specifically amend the Ontario Tax Plan for More Jobs and Growth Act, 2009, to clearly block the severance payout.

This is just the latest example of how the Ontario PC Party is standing up for Ontario families, who have had it up to here with this reckless spending, scandals, tax hikes and fee increases visited upon them by the Dalton McGuinty government.

We are standing up for Ontario's small business owners, who have tightened their own belts, who have made sacrifices in order to make ends meet while the McGuinty government continues to indulge in this outrageous spending and sweetheart deals.

We are proud, as a caucus, to be bringing forward innovative, new job-creating policies. We have put out 10 good ideas to take Ontario down an entirely different path than the one we're on today, to help stimulate our economy and help to create jobs. These ideas can be found on our website, 10for2010.ca, because we in the Ontario PC caucus want to see Ontario lead again.

There was a time not too long ago that Ontario was known for having the best jobs, for having the best hospitals, for having the best schools, the best roads in our entire country. Ontario defined being a "have" province. Ontario helped to define Canada. For generations, young people from St. John's, Newfoundland, or Victoria, BC, came to Ontario to find a good job, to start a family and to build a better future, and our province stood as a beacon of opportunity for thousands and thousands of immigrants from all corners around the world. We want Ontario to lead again, and we call upon the Premier to implement our ideas at 10for2010.ca to create jobs today.

Cancelling this HST severance payout would be a symbolic, significant and substantive show of good faith that this government has finally received the message from Ontario families. We are asking all members of the Legislature to join with us in amending the budget bill to cancel the \$25-million severance payout to the HST collectors, who won't miss a single day on the job. This is a straightforward challenge based on this simple principle shared by Ontario families from Niagara to Ottawa to Kenora to Northumberland: If you don't lose your job, you don't get severance from the taxpayer in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Before I start, I would like to thank the members who have expressed their condolences to me and my family on the recent passing of my mother. I take that to heart and appreciate that, so thank you so much.

Now we'll get to the matter at hand. I find it quite passing strange that the Leader of the Opposition, who used to sit around the cabinet table, part of a government that actually, according to history, brought this clause into the collective agreement—I believe it was the Robarts government that brought that in—and had a number of opportunities to take that out of the collective agreement and, of course, did not do that; had a number of opportunities when people transferred from one level of government to another, and paid out severances gladly, I would assume, many, many times.

What did our government do? While we were negotiating collective agreements, we were able to remove that clause from our current collective agreements for new hires going back to 2006, 2008 and 2009. That's why we were able to do that.

The question here is a question of principle. Is the opposition opposed to this on principle? I would say not, because when they were in power they did exactly what they are upset about us doing: honouring an agreement.

Or is this a question of politics? When it comes to principle, we believe that if we sign a collective agreement and enter into that, as a government we are bound by our signature. That is the most important thing. There may be howling masses on the other side who believe that our signature should be here today and gone tomorrow, but we believe it's important that we honour our agreements with OPSEU and AMAPCEO.

The fact of the matter is, the people I am proud to serve as minister at the Ministry of Revenue, who have been doing a remarkable job of collecting \$100 million of tax each and every day to pay for the public services that we value as a province, those people continue to work. We are proud of the fact that we were able to negotiate an agreement with the federal government that sees their unique skill set transferred to the federal government. As they collect the HST, a portion of that reverts back to the province, much as is the case with income tax, for example, in this province. Those people have a unique skill set, but they will not be doing the same job. The people involved have been collecting the outdated 1961 retail sales tax. Instead, they'll be collecting the modern value-added tax used around the world. They have the right skill set, but they're going to have to have a different job.

I'm proud to be part of a government—and I know that members opposite, in their caucus, are particularly proud that the job offers that people are receiving will be within 40 kilometres of where they're working today. For the federal government to offer jobs to our people and say, "Well, those jobs are in Summerside, Prince Edward Island, at the headquarters of the HST"—I don't see how that would be good for the economy of Ontario, not at all. So it is reassuring that those people will have jobs that they'll be able to find in Ontario, close to their communities.

It's a question here of whether or not we honour our agreement, an agreement entered into in good faith. Are we a party and a government that would say, "Well, now that it's inconvenient, we're going to ignore the fact that we've signed this agreement, an agreement entered into by Premier John Robarts and reaffirmed by so many different governments"? As I'm sure the other speakers will talk about, they, under this exact same clause, have been able to pay things out.

How I know that this is driven by partisanship and politics, not by principle, is the fact that I have not heard one member there say that when a certain member of this House from the party opposite did not lose a day of pay and decided to be appointed by the Prime Minister to another Legislature—there was no call that the severance that he's entitled to should not be paid to him, so I find it somewhat odd. If the member opposite was getting up and saying that perhaps Senator Runciman should not receive the severance that's part of his compensation package of being a member of this place, then perhaps it would be a question of principle, but I don't seem to see that. All I know is that the Leader of the Opposition, when sitting around the cabinet table, approved a number

of deals, over the years that they were in government, that I know my colleagues are going to be able to talk about in great detail. They found this not offensive but actually honouring a collective agreement.

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This is a question of partisanship and politics versus principle. If you sign an agreement, I say to someone who desperately wants to be Premier one day, you send a very strong signal to the people who would work with you as to whether or not you could be counted on to honour the agreement on behalf of the government of Ontario. Whether we find those agreements subsequently to be of question, we know as a government that our job is to honour those agreements. I've had an opportunity to speak to my constituents about this and they're reassured that there is a government that keeps its word.

I'll yield the floor to others, but I've been delighted to be part of today's debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm proud to be standing today alongside our leader Tim Hudak and the PC caucus to call on the Premier of Ontario to cancel severance payments to HST tax collectors, who are not losing a day of work.

While the McGuinty Liberals are going to collect \$3 billion more in taxes off the backs of Ontario families, this government is adding further insult to injury by forcing Ontarians to pay \$25 million in severance to HST tax collectors. In fact, it is akin to when Woolco was acquired by Wal-Mart. Those employees were not entitled to receive up to \$45,000 worth of severance to do the same job in the same location with the same title, but that's precisely what is happening in this case. These tax collectors are eligible for up to \$45,000 in severance—same job, same office, just a different logo hanging on the shingle outside.

We in the PC caucus do not support that principle. We do not support the principle that if you do not lose your job you collect severance. We think that if you do not lose your job you do not collect severance. We hope that the MPPs in the other political parties will endorse this principle.

The McGuinty Liberals have had five separate opportunities to avoid this handsome bonus being paid to people who aren't losing their jobs. In fact, they renegotiated the collective agreement with the HST tax collectors twice. They also negotiated the CITCA agreement, which was the foundation of the HST. They enacted the HST legislation, and in March the McGuinty Liberals finalized the human resources agreement that transfers HST tax collectors to the federal government, yet the McGuinty Liberals, as we just heard from the revenue minister, want to reach back 40 years to a Premier who left his job before I was born. That is how much of a joke their argument is—again, five separate agreements under Mr. McGuinty's watch and five different opportunities for the McGuinty Liberals to show leadership and stand up for Ontario families during a time of economic restraint.

Again, our position is very clear: If you don't lose your job, you don't collect severance. Ontario families know this. While they're tightening their belts and making sacrifices, they are being slapped in the face with higher energy bills by a hidden hydro tax, a greedy \$3-billion HST tax grab, a health tax they've been paying since this government came to office, and now they have to pay \$25 million in severance to people who are not losing their jobs.

It's against the backdrop of a deficit that is higher than all the other nine provinces combined. It's a debt that will have doubled in the eight years that this Premier has been in office and a reliance on federal welfare payments that will triple this year. Ontario as a have-not province before Dalton McGuinty took office would have been unheard of. Shame on you. Ontario families cannot afford Dalton McGuinty anymore.

With this motion, we are calling on the McGuinty Liberals to make a choice and stand up with us for Ontario's families by cancelling the severance payments to those who are not losing their jobs. We ask for true leadership, like the leadership Tim Hudak has shown today by introducing this budget amendment, and demand that taxpayers and their collectors return this \$25-million taxpayer burden right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: If there were any doubt that the neo-con reflex of nastiness that is so emblematic of the dark Harris-Eves years has once again infested the soul of the Conservative Party, this resolution has removed all such doubt forever.

If you sign an agreement during the term of a Liberal government and you think you have a deal, you do. But this resolution says that if you sign an agreement before or during the term that a Conservative government just may serve, they may honour it only if it suits them. If you have an agreement under a Conservative government and your job is something that allows Conservatives to play the politics of division and get in a cheap shot, then not only do you not have a deal, you're in for abuse and ridicule while Tories play to their right-wing, neo-con gallery, stoking the anger that is the hallmark of how they behave in government.

The principle of honouring a legally negotiated and signed agreement is one that the Conservative Party, while in power, adhered to. It paid severance to Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs staff who were transferred to the University of Guelph in 1996. They did it again in 1997 with 841 employees of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Later in the term of that government, the Conservatives paid severance to 3,311 employees who worked in psychiatric care.

But these people couldn't be lumped together and given the sneering label of HST tax collectors. That somehow renders these 1,251 employees of the Ministry of Revenue as less human and less valuable and less worthy of dignity than employees of agriculture, food and rural affairs, or health care workers.

This philistine approach to men and women who can be labelled as tax collectors ought to give everyone pause who plans to give a Conservative a dollar. This reflexive ideological nastiness ought to cause everyone who might consider voting Conservative to recoil in the horror that awaits them should that party ever again form government in Ontario. This clear, biased, inhumane, unprofessional and presupposing illegal challenge, illegal position ought to cause every man and woman who is a supporter or a member of that once-great party to hang their head in shame.

These men and women who leave the Ontario public service and join the Canada Revenue Agency as new hires have no seniority. The emotionally loaded Conservative resolution failed to mention that. Ministry of Revenue staff who choose to join the Canada Revenue Agency have an employment guarantee for only two years. The Conservative resolution that calls them "tax collectors" doesn't mention that.

So let's suggest a resolution that actually tells it like it is. Listen up, Conservatives. This is what your party really stands for: That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call upon the Premier of Ontario to adopt the principle that if you sign a legally binding agreement with the government of Ontario and it does not suit Conservative ideological politics-of-division purposes, the government of Ontario reserves the right to revoke your legally negotiated benefits and stick it to you.

Let's draw a comparison between how Liberals govern and how Ontario Conservatives govern. If you come to work with the province while Liberals govern Ontario, you'll be treated with respect and dignity. And the contractual arrangements you have, whether or not you signed them on our watch or during our term or that of any previous party or government, those terms will be honoured. To a Conservative, a contract or a signed and legally negotiated collective agreement is only valid if it works to the advantage of Conservatives. If the terms might benefit you, the Conservatives will abrogate a legal agreement if they are in power, and to all other governments, they advocate abrogating a binding agreement while in opposition.

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This resolution is more than a promise that says that the word of a Conservative is worthless, and that the signature of a Conservative leader isn't worth the ink on the paper. This resolution goes deeper than a threat to everyone who works in the Ontario public service, in the broader public services or everyone who has ever entered into a collective agreement with a public sector organization. This Conservative resolution is just the latest sneering neo-con taunt to Ontarians and a warning to everyone who would equate their party, their ideology or their platform with the concept of democracy. All that's missing is a final outstretched finger to Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have to address a couple of words to the television audience. I'm looking at you in

that television camera, all 43 of you who are watching: You're not watching *The Stupid Show*. You think you are. This is as good as *Family Guy*, except *Family Guy* is humorous. What you just heard from the member from Mississauga—Streetsville would be laughable if it weren't so sad. We're talking about \$25 million that we're going to pay in severance to people who aren't being fired; \$25 million that you could have used, for example, to take care of autistic children and their families who you took to court so you could get out of doing that. That's what we're talking about here. So let's be absolutely plain and clear about what this discussion is about.

There are public servants in British Columbia who signed a similar deal this week to move to federal positions, and they will not be entitled to severance payments. But not here in Ontario, don't you know, where we're rich. We must be, because we use Dalton McGuinty's yardstick of how much money you can spend. Apparently, if you take a look at last week's budget, it's a hell of a lot more than what he's bringing in. When asked about it, McGuinty defended it on the basis that the severance is provided for in the collective agreement. McGuinty said, "When we do business with each other and ... do business with the world ... when we give you our word, our word is our word." He said that on March 11.

I don't know what Dalton McGuinty interprets as the criteria for when his word is his word, but apparently it doesn't apply to taxpayers in the province of Ontario. There were promises made with your word being your word, Premier, that had to do with whether or not we all pay a health tax. You call it a premium, but we know what it is. Your word was, "No new taxes." The HST: No new taxes. The new line item going on your hydro bill: No new taxes. There are so many examples of that. So if your word is your word, what I say is, why didn't you keep yours, Premier?

Since I was first elected in 2007, I've stood in this House and I've debated many bills that could be charitably described as nothing less than stupid, and I've commented on that before. We're not talking about a bill here. We're talking about a severance payment that's contained in an overall budget: \$25 million to people who basically have to go through the arduous task of having their business cards changed.

Have you listened recently to what the pundits are saying on the radio, in the papers, everywhere? Who in Ontario gets severance to leave one job, stay in their office, get a new business card, sit at their desk and continue with a new job, and oh, by the way, with a 3.4% increase in salary? That is what we're talking about. I don't know about members from the government side, but everywhere I go, people want to talk about it, and I can tell you I haven't met one person yet who says that they agree with that idea.

When it comes to having a lock on particular types of resolutions, motions or legislation that are presented here, as I said, I've been here since 2007, so going on three years. I've talked about some of the legislation that's

rather silly and I've talked about it in the context of bills that were about nanny statism. I guess charitably I could call them banning bills: banning pesticides, banning smoking in cars, banning pit bulls, banning plastic bags and so on.

What I'd like to say today is that we in the PC caucus decided that we would come up with a ban of our own. With our motion today, what we're calling for, what Tim Hudak and the PC caucus are calling for, is a ban on stupidity in the Liberal government, because paying \$25 million in severance to government employees who will not miss a day of work is just stupid. Plain and simple, it's stupid.

Isn't it offensive that the McGuinty government is forcing each and every one of us to pay 8% more for almost everything we buy each and every day because of the HST? From Internet services to gas to hydro to vet bills to accountant fees, everything will cost Ontarians more. Isn't it offensive enough that the flawed Green Energy Act is going to force Ontarians to pay more for their gas and hydro bills because of the \$53-million hidden hydro tax? Isn't it offensive enough that this governmental is running a \$20-billion deficit this year that's going to have to be paid for by who? Our children and our grandchildren. Isn't it offensive enough that this government is so addicted to spending that despite repeated advice from respected economists, this government doesn't have a plan to get Ontario out of deficit?

Open Ontario indeed. I got word of yet another plant closing in my own riding this afternoon. Why? Because conditions in Ontario don't merit keeping it open—definitely a jurisdictional thing. This is the Open Ontario that we're talking about.

Isn't it offensive enough that despite paying a health tax for the last six years, Ontarians are having to endure dramatic cuts in patient care? From emergency room, clinic and bed closures to firing of nurses, Ontarians are paying more for health care and they're getting less. So what's offensive? That's offensive.

What's even more offensive? That before we ever got to a point in time where we could look at a recessionary period and listen to our Premier and his government tell us that everything bad that's happened to them and that's happened to us in Ontario comes as a result of a period of recession, in fact, we all know—and I say to you Ontarians out there watching us, we all know—that there were over 200,000 valuable manufacturing jobs lost before we ever got to a recession here in Ontario. So now what are we doing? We're paying the piper for a lack of policy then, and we're going to continue to pay the piper for a lack of policy now.

This is pure stupidity, pure and simple stupidity. You do not pay \$25 million for nothing—you don't do it—and there's not an Ontarian out there, save and except for the recipients of that, who would say otherwise.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I don't pretend to be as articulate as the member from Thornhill. Nobody has a

monopoly on stupidity, that's for sure, especially after hearing some of the words.

I want to start by sharing a couple of things that drive this government these days. We believe strongly in public services. That's why we've worked so darn hard over the last seven years to raise up those services that were so trampled down by the previous government. We value public servants, and that's why we honour agreements that are in place regarding their positions.

By the way, the three examples that were quoted by my previous government speaker did reference a total payout of some \$50 million. It all occurred between 1996 and 2003—

Interjection: On your watch.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: —on your previous government's watch, under this same clause.

1700

So the Leader of the Opposition can say that he wants to use all the tools at his disposal to stop this—I don't know where he was back when he was sitting around the cabinet then with the same clause making the payouts—or that he's standing up for Ontarians, but frankly I don't know where he was then. If the measure of standing up for Ontarians is breaking your word, then, to their credit—I want to say this to the members opposite—they didn't break their word then; they followed through with the contract.

We believe in hard work on this side of the House. That's why we've doubled our investment in the Second Career program, another 30,000 spots. That's why we're investing \$1.3 billion in our Employment Ontario program; because hard work is a value that we appreciate.

We certainly value fairness, and that's why we're honouring the agreement that previous speakers have already noted was put in place by the Conservatives when they were in government.

I don't know what it's like where you come from, but where I come from, you're out in the rural part of Flamborough and you look somebody in the eye and you shake hands with them and you say, "That's what we're going to do." Not only that, but they expect you to keep your word; they don't expect you to break a contract every time you think it's convenient.

I want to ask, perhaps rhetorically, where does it end? If you don't like this one and you think we should break our word on this one, what happens tomorrow with any other? Do you break that too? Do you just say, "Hey, it doesn't count. We want a mulligan. We want to take it all back. You can't trust us when we give you our word?"

Anyhow, I think the party opposite insists on too strict a paradox to insist that this government do what they weren't prepared to do, what they put in place and weren't prepared to do. But somehow we're supposed to do that. We're supposed to be the bad guys that break our word on the contract.

The Harris government was the government that included the Harris government severance clause in their collective agreements in 1996, and reaffirmed this clause, the clause that we're talking about today, twice before

the 2003 Ontario general election: in 1998 and 2001. I noticed that the Leader of the Opposition left that out. He didn't mention that. Did you notice that, colleagues? He didn't mention that. He didn't say anything about that.

I'm assuming, by the way, that the payments to OMAFRA and to the Ministry of Health and the second lot of Ministry of Health employees that were transferred—410 employees, 841 employees and 3,311 employees, respectively—I'm assuming that the government did that because they understood that they were bound by the legal agreement that they had in place. I don't fault them for that any more than I'm prepared to lay any blame here at the situation that we're in here because we're moving ahead. I think that's the big difference between the opposition, who insist on looking in rear-view mirrors unless and until it reflects something that they don't like to admit they did, and the government on this side of the House that's looking purposefully, steadfastly and with a real sense of direction at the future.

I think it's important, too, not to miss the inconsequential fact, and if the people who are watching on television—the member from Thornhill said "all 46 of you"; I suspect it is more than that—that there are less than 8% of these employees that will get the full severance. The employees that are, in fact, going over to the federal government will not receive—they're losing all their seniority, by the way; that's another point.

The third point is that when we were in contract negotiations in 2005 and, I believe, 2003, we removed for all new employees the very clause that the members opposite are speaking about.

Mr. Jeff Leal: They forgot that point too.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: They left that out as well.

We get up every day and we try to make a difference, and generally we do. It helps if you're not too intensely partisan. I can think of a lot of other resolutions that the party opposite might have brought usefully before this House, where we could have worked co-operatively to build a stronger, healthier, more caring society.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah, you always support our motions.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Well, something less partisan and something that you at least could say, on a good day, that you practised the spirit of yourselves, but you certainly can't do that given the anecdotal evidence we shared today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You haven't recognized me yet.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I was about to, but you jumped in before I did. The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join the debate on this motion today, where our leader, Tim Hudak, calls on the Premier of Ontario to adopt the principle that if

you do not lose your job, you do not collect severance, and to cancel severance payments to HST tax collectors who keep their jobs.

If you went around this province and you told people, "This is a set of principles. I'd like you to give a comment on them," and one of them is that severance is given to people who (a) lose their jobs or (b) don't lose their jobs, I can be very comfortable in saying that an almost overwhelming, perhaps unanimous, majority would say that severance has a very specific purpose. Severance is there to assist in the transition from the loss of one job till you find another.

It's very clear and it's very simple. No one ever expects that someone will collect something that was designed and built for that very purpose: to help someone during that transition period. No one would ever expect that someone would be collecting that severance when they're not losing their job, they're not losing a day of work, they're not losing a day's pay. In fact, in this case, most of them are seeing their wages increase.

The government is going to give you all kinds of spin about why they felt they had to go ahead and make these payments and proceed with them. One of the things the Premier says is, "Our word is our word." I'll paraphrase because I don't have the quote sitting in front of me. He talked about how important keeping one's word is. This is from the very same Premier who, seven short years ago, when he was campaigning to be Premier, got in front of a whole cadre of television cameras, in front of all kinds of newspaper and radio reporters, and proudly stood and signed the taxpayers protection agreement and pledged—with his own signature, not John Robarts's signature—that he would not raise your taxes. As soon as he got into office, he broke his word and dishonoured his pledge to the people of Ontario. Now, all of a sudden, this Premier is telling us how important it is to keep one's word. What is important to these guys is that when they haven't done their homework and they haven't prepared properly, they put themselves in a box.

There were ample opportunities for this government to honour that principle that most people support around severance. There were ample opportunities, as they were negotiating the CITCA agreement with the federal government, to sit down with their federal counterparts and say, "Hey, you know what? We've got a situation here. Can we negotiate an agreement that, in the case of someone losing their job after the transfer to the federal government, the severance paid out to them would be divvied out commensurate with the amount of time they served with the Ontario government and the federal government"—that could have been done—"and no severance paid for anyone who doesn't lose their job?"

That is just the kind of common-sense approach that people across this province would have hoped that the government would have sat down and negotiated. There were any number of occasions while negotiating that agreement—and they want to talk about previous Conservative governments and their position on severance. At no time was there a situation where they were nego-

tiating an agreement with the federal government to assume provincial tax collectors becoming federal tax collectors—at no time. That's never been part of the discussion.

1710

You people knew exactly what you were doing. You were taking provincial employees, transferring them to the federal government, and you never for a moment considered the consequences to the hard-working families in this province who are bending over backwards to try to survive, to try to keep their heads above water, to try to pay their bills.

In the midst of the worst recession we've seen in our lifetime, in midst of the largest deficit in this province's history, in the midst of a deficit cumulatively more than all of the provinces combined, you're telling the taxpayers in this province, who pay their bills dutifully every day, hoping that they're getting good government in return, "By the way, \$25 million more are going to be taken away from you, dear taxpayer, to satisfy the failures of us, the McGuinty government."

Whatever happened to honouring the collective agreement with the people of Ontario? The people of Ontario get up every day and go to work—if they've got a job in this province; if your government hasn't taken it away from them—in the belief that if they do their job and if they pay their taxes, this province is going to be a better place. You've shaken their faith in that belief because you've taken their hard-earned money, handed it over to people who will not lose a single day of pay, will not lose a nickel. Shame on you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I want to preface by saying just let's slow down a minute here. I feel like I've encountered two old neighbourhood dogs, half blind, lifting their legs trying to mark out new turf. What I regret is that the hard-working, very skilled and capable public servants of this province are being, in effect, held hostage, if not actually being used as cannon fodder in this debate.

Mind you, don't get me wrong. I'll join the member for Renfrew any day in an attack upon this government. I have no time for Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals after what they've done to working folk in this province over the course of the last—what?—six, seven years now—far too long.

Let's be very clear. The government should have been upfront and candid about this as being yet another cost of its HST proposal—end of story. Nobody's disputing that there's going to be some payout. I'm going to get into that in just a few minutes.

Now, is the official opposition entitled to exploit this to further its political agenda? Well, of course, they are. Do I agree with them on this occasion? Of course not. Do I find myself sharing space with the Liberals in the government? Not on your life. But I want to let you know what some of the facts are in this scenario.

The government knew that a whole lot of people in its Ministry of Revenue were going to lose jobs as a result of

this government's imposition of this brand new—and, you know, for a while we were calling it the BS tax; right? But then the Speaker shut that down because that was unparliamentary. I don't know what BS means where you come from, but where I come from, I don't know. It just doesn't seem unparliamentary at all when you think in the context of what the HST is going to do to the folks down Welland riding and the BS that the government used to try to sell it. But that's unparliamentary.

The opposition parties feel like we should be calling the nurse to administer some novocaine to the Premier, because we're drilling here, and we know we hit a nerve; we can see the response. But it's just hard extracting the facts.

As you've heard, Andrea Horwath and the NDP have already been up on the floor, question period after question period, challenging this government to produce the paperwork in terms of what the HST is really going to mean to so many folks across this province, folks who can ill afford it at this point after so much has been done to them by this government.

I don't care whether you're talking about working folks—because, Lord knows, there are few enough of them left. It was only three weeks ago that it was like the last man standing: John Deere down in Welland—100 years of producing agricultural equipment, and finally, three weeks ago, maybe four, the last man left. There were women working there too, but it happened to be a man. This government didn't even blink at the prospect of John Deere, that historic, traditional manufacturer, shutting down here in the province of Ontario. Mind you, it didn't have much leverage, because this government, of course, has refused to adopt a buy-Ontario policy from the get-go. If it had a buy-Ontario policy, it could have used that as some leverage with John Deere, just like it could have used it with Siemens and maybe Lakeport down in Hamilton.

Hamilton and Niagara have been hard hit. I'm not sure how much more we can take. It used to be that when you lost 1,000 jobs, like at Atlas Steel, that was a crisis. Now, when you lose 15 jobs down in Hamilton and Niagara, never mind 150, that's catastrophic because there are just so few jobs left and those families are struggling. So they get hit with another tax, and a tax on those sorts of things that they have less control over, in terms of paying the tax, than they would over so many others. Everything from being born to being dead is going to be taxed now with an additional 8%.

Let's understand that the contract, which I understand is article 53 of the collective agreement between the OPSEU workers—and some of them are AMAPCEO, because some of them are in managerial positions. In fact, the highest-earning chunk are going to be AMAPCEO members. Article 53 is a standard severance agreement that's found in most, if not all, union employment contracts.

I listened to the member from Renfrew, and he was making reference to some of the common law around severance compensation for unjust dismissal. It's not so bizarre a proposition.

My good friend, my dear friend, who I miss so much here in this chamber, Bob Runciman—capably replaced—is now in the Senate. He got his severance when he left here, and he didn't lose a day of work. He went right into a very similar job with a new employer. That is called the Senate of Canada, and this is called the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Again, I miss Bob. I miss him a great deal. He and I go back a long way, and I have the utmost respect for him. He and I did a lot of work together. Although I'm pleased for him at having ascended—it's not the best choice of words, especially in view of the season that we're in—to the Senate, to the red chamber. He has done well, and I'm sure he's going to make an impact there. He, like any of us, should we retire, resign or be defeated, got a severance. It's in the employment contract that we have as MPPs here.

1720

I am not going to deny any worker the rights that they have under a collective bargaining agreement. Who would dare do that? Those rights aren't granted just with a snap of the fingers. Do you understand that working people in this province, in this country, across this western world have fought over the course of decades and generations to win the modest rights that they have in their workplaces, including the right to belong to a union, including the right to collectively bargain?

When you sit at the bargaining table, there's always give and take. This provision, article 53 with the severance provision—and let's understand what it really says: It's one week of pay for every year of service. Come on, now; when you deconstruct it a little bit, it's not quite as dramatic, is it? One week of pay for every year of service: Why, the Employment Standards Act provides some minimum equivalent in terms of severance pay based on length of service.

Let's understand that only a handful of those 1,000-plus workers are going to get the full payout of some \$45,000. Those are going to be the auditors, the high-priced help, the ones at the top end of the salary grid. Most of them will belong to AMAPCEO and not OPSEU, but that's fair enough. The vast majority of them, who haven't worked—because, you see, to collect that, you've got to have worked for at least 26 years. Most of those people being transferred, because they lost their jobs with the Ministry of Revenue, province of Ontario—and I'm not saying that's a good thing, because I'm saying that this government just did the wrongest thing anybody ever done when it imposed the HST on people here in the province of Ontario; make no mistake about it. And we have not yet seen all of the consequences that are going to flow down. This is but one of them. There's more to come; trust me. The first boot has barely hit the floor. We're waiting for the second boot to drop yet. It will drop, it will drop hard and it will drop heavy.

Let's put this in perspective. An employee who works 26 years will be entitled to maximum entitlement, which is one week's salary for every year of service. The vast majority of those workers make modest incomes. They're

intake people, clerical people. They work hard. Their work is important. Should we pretend that it isn't, that the collection of public monies and the public trust involved and the need to maintain the integrity of the system doesn't demand and require and call for skilled, qualified workers? Of course it does.

Let's understand what happens when they lose their jobs with the Ministry of Revenue, province of Ontario, and acquire these new jobs with the federal government, because the impression that some—and I'm convinced it's only as a result of their failure to properly investigate the matter. I can't for the life of me believe—because, you see, you don't have to make things up to attack the Liberals here at Queen's Park. By no stretch of the imagination do you have to concoct anything or engage in any alchemy to be able to criticize the Liberal government here at Queen's Park. The facts stand and speak for themselves on a daily basis, on an hourly basis.

While those workers get their severance pay, to which they're entitled as a result of a contract—and understand that when you bargain for severance pay, you concede something else; you understand bargaining, Speaker. And as I say, workers have fought and struggled long enough and hard enough and paid a huge price, oftentimes with their own blood and their own freedom, for the right to belong to unions and the right to collectively bargain. So I say, shame on anybody who wants to attack the collective bargaining process; shame on anybody who wants to criticize workers for the modest gains that they acquire through the collective bargaining process, because, you see, what happens to those Ministry of Revenue, province of Ontario workers when they become federal employees is, they lose their seniority, and seniority is one of the most fundamental rights that a worker should have and acquires through collective bargaining. I say, shame on this government for cooking up a deal with the feds that forced those workers, those province of Ontario Ministry of Revenue workers, to forfeit their seniority. Shame on Dalton McGuinty. He's robbed them of their seniority. That is one of the most sacred things in a collective bargaining agreement: seniority and seniority rights.

What does that mean? Let me tell you what it means. It means that when Mr. Harper, with the help of Mr. Ignatieff—

Ms. M. Aileen Carroll: Who?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Somebody says, "Who?" Ms. Carroll says, "Who?" when I say Mr. Ignatieff, and I agree. It's more like Mr. Ignatieff, not, "Who?" but "Mr. Ignatieff? So what?"

But with the help of Mr. Ignatieff, we're going to see the privatization of revenue collection at the federal level, we're going to see a contraction of that particular workforce, and who are the first people who are going to lose their jobs when that contraction occurs? Those provincial workers who were forced to become federal employees, having lost their seniority rights in the process.

Dalton McGuinty didn't give a tinker's damn about those workers, because he fed them to the Harper lion.

Dalton McGuinty fed those workers to the furnaces of neo-liberalism. If this government's going to be criticized, it should be criticized for not having looked out for those workers when it cooked up this deal with the feds, because as sure as God made little apples, you can count on it. The mere situation that governments find themselves in with reduced revenues and the fact that right-wing governments, whether it's Dalton McGuinty here at Queen's Park or Stephen Harper up in Ottawa, resolve shortfalls in revenue by attacking working people and by cutting back on public sector services—we're going to see it here in the province of Ontario, too. Wait till we see it in health care. Do you think shutting down the emergency rooms at Port Colborne and Fort Erie was the end of the closures? No, no. Don't even think for a minute that Mr. McGuinty is finished with the hospitals with the closure of Fort Erie and Port Colborne emergency rooms, not for a minute. You can count on that; you can bet the farm on that one.

So you see, the resolution that should have been put forward today is one that tells workers that we respect their right to collectively bargain and we respect their right to receive what's due to them, pursuant to collective bargaining agreements, but that we condemn—we condemn in the strongest way—we damn the McGuinty government for having stolen from these workers their seniority.

I would like to hear Liberal backbenchers who represent some of these folks in their ridings stand up and join me in condemning Mr. McGuinty. I would expect some of those Liberal backbenchers to stand up and speak out for folks in their own ridings, who they're supposed to be representing, saying to this Legislature and to their Premier that the Tories are way off base when it comes to arguing that people shouldn't receive severance.

But you know what? Why isn't this debate about Conrad Black not receiving a long enough jail sentence? I could have endorsed a motion from the Progressive Conservative Party that condemned the inappropriate leniency shown to that thief Conrad Black. As I told you before, I just wish he had done his pre-trial time in the Don jail, the old Don, and maybe a couple of months of assessment over at Millhaven. That would have pleased me to no end, rather than being sent off—at least the Americans have the gonads to ship him off to a prison, although it's not much of a prison; it's pretty country-clubbish. That's why I say nine months' dead time at the Don and a couple of months at the Haven, Millhaven, for assessment—and the Minister of Correctional Services, of course, isn't responding, but that would have been most appropriate.

1730

Why isn't this Legislature, on the occasion of a motion from my friends in the Conservative caucus, condemning the severances that are being paid to the bank barons who are robbing working families blind but who, when the—why, the top brass at Nortel walk away from that, leaving behind a trail of unemployment and despair, and the top

dogs at Nortel walk away with multi-million dollar severances. You want to attack severances? Let's start attacking the severances of the CEOs who have been robbing people blind here in the province of Ontario and across North America.

You want to start attacking severances? Let's start attacking the severances of some of the high-priced hospital CEO types, with their \$800,000-plus salaries and severances to match, when they're running hospitals as if they were widget factories and shutting down emergency rooms, aiding and abetting the McGuinty agenda of privatizing health care.

The statement that 1,251 members stand to receive severance of \$45,000 is inaccurate. I've already told you, very few will receive that severance amount, because you need 26 years of service—one week of salary for every year of service. You've got to be in the highest salary range; they're the smallest number. The biggest number are front-line clerical-type staff, intake staff, who earn a fraction of what the auditors make, many of whom have not worked for 26 years, who are going to receive a fraction of that severance and who are going to lose seniority.

Now, you can bet your boots that this government didn't sit down with those workers to talk about preparing a package that this government could put to the federal government to protect those workers' interests more effectively. I understand the Conservative interest in appealing to the actual perception out there that we've got all these civil servants who don't earn their keep. Mike Harris appealed to that back in 1995, and we endured—suffered—Walkerton, amongst other things.

Why I'm upset with Mike Harris is because he set a standard for Dalton McGuinty. Why I'm angry with Mike Harris is because he laid the groundwork of privatization and of defunding essential public services that Dalton McGuinty has followed. Mike Harris did the heavy lifting and Dalton McGuinty is getting the free ride, and I find that repugnant. You remember when the Liberals campaigned they said they were going to be different. They said it was time for change. Well, change is small change on a good day, mere coins, and we're not even talking loonies and toonies yet.

It's regrettable that the privatization agenda remains as strong as it is. Why, hospitals alone, Mr. McGuinty's so-called P3s, which he decried when the Conservative government of the day was using private sector financing, for-profit, Bay Street, big-bucks financing, diverting millions and millions of dollars from each hospital construction project away from health care and into the pockets of the Bay Street fat cats—Mr. McGuinty decried that, yet upon election, and even re-election, he has pursued the same policy and, if anything, compounded it.

We've got folks coming up here next week, part of the health coalition, demonstrating in front of a speech that the minister is making downtown here. These are folks who are concerned about the closure of the Fort Erie and Port Colborne emergency rooms. Do you understand

what it's like to be in emergency, a medical emergency, and to think that you're going to be able to go to the emergency room at the hospital that is just four kilometres down the road, but then to have to, if you can, strike yourself on the forehead and say, "No, that's the one Dalton McGuinty shut down. Now we've got to travel the 406 all the way to St. Catharines."

If you live down in Wainfleet, I tell you—Wainfleet is part of Welland riding: a great community. It's a rural community; it's a pretty big rural community. Those folks used to be able to go to the Port Colborne hospital if they had an emergency. Let me tell you, I've driven from Wainfleet to St. Catharines. There's no sense going east of the 406; you're just wasting time. But you could spend a good 40 or 45 minutes getting to St. Catharines from Wainfleet. A whole lot of people are going to die in 45 minutes, aren't they? There's already a coroner's inquest into one death: a beautiful young woman in a motor vehicle accident down by Highway 3 and the QEW for whom the Fort Erie emergency room wasn't available because, you see, Mr. McGuinty shut it down. Mr. McGuinty says, "No, I didn't shut it down. The LHIN shut it down." The LHIN says, "Well, no, we didn't shut it down. The hospital board shut it down"—that unelected, unaccountable, anonymous, faceless, nameless hospital board.

How about a little accountability? I don't want to hear arguments about LHINs any more than I want to hear a debate about hard-working workers—public sector workers are not receiving what is due to them under a collective bargaining agreement: a lawful contract. So I say to you, why isn't the government abolishing the LHINs and requiring hospital governments to be elected, just like city councillors, school board trustees and regional councillors are? But that would be so democratic. That would make the decision-makers around hospitals accountable to the communities that they represent. It might make those hospital boards more representative of the communities that they come from, the communities that those hospitals serve.

I've actually heard people say, "Well, no, it's not appropriate to elect hospital boards. It requires a special expertise." Well, heck, I'd like to start seeing some sort of testing procedures, some sort of threshold applied to election to the provincial Legislature. I'm not sure how many of the 107 would pass it. If you want to start applying those kinds of standards to democratic representation, you've got a whole lot of people up in Parliament in Ottawa on Parliament Hill who would be hard-pressed to pass that kind of threshold too.

There are so many important things that could have been and should have been dealt with this afternoon. It's sad that—as I say, I understand the interest of the Conservatives in pursuing it. I have no hesitation in standing up here and saying I know public sector workers, just like almost all of you, if not all of you, and I've worked with them. I've worked with them in the courtrooms. I've worked with them historically, and now as an MPP. Of course, we work with them all the time.

We're the ones who phone them when we need a Ministry of the Environment worker to come out and check out an environmental issue. They're the ones we phone when we need somebody from the Office of the Worker Adviser to protect the rights of one of our constituents who is being screwed around on their WCB claim. We phone the Ministry of Labour when one of our constituents calls up and talks about having been fired or dumped without severance pay that was due them.

I'm not afraid to stand up here and defend those workers. Those public sector workers keep our communities safe, they keep us healthy and they are the mark, I say to you, of a democratic, civilized and civil society. I don't see anything to be gained in using them as political pawns, holding them hostage or using them as cannon fodder. But I do want to tell them how badly they were abused by Mr. McGuinty and his government when their seniority rights weren't protected.

1740

Sure as Mr. McGuinty knew that he was going to have to pay out the severances pursuant to article 53 of the collective bargaining agreement, he knew that these people were going to be denied their seniority rights. It seems to me that Mr. McGuinty is playing fast and loose with the lives and the futures and the welfare and the security of these workers.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Let's talk about Rae days.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Somebody mentions Rae days, the last Liberal Premier of this province. I say to you that Mr. McGuinty has outdone Bob Rae. Mr. McGuinty has out-Rae'd him. I've got to tell you, Bob Rae fades in comparison to Mr. McGuinty, first, with Mr. McGuinty's deficits, and second, with his demonstrated disregard for workers' rights like we're witnessing right here, denying workers their right to seniority. So I don't need any lessons from Liberal backbenchers who were mere pups at the time about Liberal Premier Mr. Rae. Never liked Liberals—didn't like them then; don't like them now; never will.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important issue.

I want to start with two very important lessons I've been taught in my lifetime so far. The first one is from my parents, a very important lesson, which is that, "A deal is a deal is a deal. Always emphasize, when you're talking to your siblings or your friends, that if you make a deal, you honour that deal, because your integrity relies on that."

The second one—I paid a lot of money to get that lesson—was in law school, that when you sign a contract, you abide by that contract. That is something I am sure we are all also taught, and you don't have to go to law school: that when you put ink to paper and sign an agreement, you honour that agreement. If you don't honour that agreement, you pay a price for it. There are

damages associated with it. There are costs associated with it.

Can we imagine in this instance, as the member from Welland has so eloquently pointed out article 53 of the agreement, if this motion which has been suggested by the Conservative Party passes, what kind of damages there could be for the government of Ontario? Far in excess, I would argue, of \$25 million which has been paid out in severance—far more in excess.

So I think it is our collective responsibility as the government of Ontario to make sure that the agreement that has been signed—and I don't want to even get into who signed the agreement, how long ago, how many times it was renewed by the previous Conservative government. A contract is a contract; it's an agreement which is extremely important. If you don't honour that agreement, there are costs associated to it from those workers, from those unions, which will be far higher than the \$25 million which is being paid in severance.

I think the member from Welland spoke quite eloquently about what this severance is about. The severance is for the loss of seniority of those workers who are being transferred to the federal government. By the way, that particular transfer of responsibilities of these workers from the provincial government to the federal government is going to save the provincial government of Ontario \$100 million a year—\$100 million a year. That's \$1 billion in the next 10 years. That is a significant savings for our taxpayers in Ontario. That's something that has to be remembered, how important it is that one of the benefits of harmonizing the GST and the PST—

Interjections.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I won't even get into the benefits that are there for the businesses, for our economy as we grow this 21st-century economy, something which has been supported by the Conservatives in the past, but the benefit alone in terms of the savings to the provincial government is significant. It's \$1 billion over 10 years, which is incredibly important, especially in a time of economic uncertainty that we live in as we're trying to grow this economy.

So I will be voting against this particular motion because of the time-honoured rules which have been taught by my parents, and something I learned as a lawyer in law school: that when you sign an agreement, you follow and abide by the agreement.

As new agreements have been signed by this particular government, this severance clause has been taken out. It doesn't exist. So as we're negotiating those new agreements, we're making sure that this type of clause does not exist. So as we are negotiating those new agreements, we're making sure that this type of clause does not exist. But since it exists in this particular instance, we've got to make sure that we honour those workers and the work they have done and pay them the right amount of severance, as pointed out by other members in this Legislature from the government side.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Before I start, I want to thank all the men and women in the public service who are working hard on behalf of all of us across the province of Ontario.

I listened to the member from Welland speak about the importance of public servants and the importance of collective agreements. When the government or the employer signs an agreement with employees, it should be honoured and it should be respected. In this case we, as an employer, and the civil service workers in Ontario have an agreement. That's why we honoured this agreement.

The honourable members from the opposite side should remember very well that when we have an agreement with people, we should respect it. We're not the NDP government. You remember, the honourable member from Welland, when they wrote the social contract, which did not honour the agreements back then. The Conservative government is also trying right now to not honour any agreements.

I was listening to the member from Thornhill speak about the difference between the agreements here in Ontario and in British Columbia. In the British Columbia agreements, they kept their seniority. In this province, the people who worked on the PST lost their seniority. Therefore, we're obligated, as the people who are in charge of transferring those people to different departments, to pay that severance pay which we owe them as a government and as taxpayers.

I was listening very carefully to the member from Welland explaining the importance of collective agreements. The workers in this province fought very hard to establish the right to gain some severance if they lose their job, if something happens to them at work or if the company goes bankrupt. What are they supposed to do? They are supposed to get severance for the work that they did on behalf of all of us in the province of Ontario. That's what we do in this province. That's what our government did: honoured this agreement and paid them severance, because they lost a job with us. The agreement with the provincial government was terminated, so they moved to different departments. It's totally different. They lost their seniority, and it's their right to collect this money. I spoke to many different people from my constituency of London-Fanshawe when they came to my office and asked me about this very important issue, and I explained to them, "If you work in a company, if you work in a factory, if you work in an office for a certain time, you're entitled to severance if you lose your job or if your job is being terminated. It's the same thing."

When we speak about those people who moved to different departments, we have to speak about the honourable members from the opposite side who, when they moved from the provincial government to the federal government, collected their severance pay. I'll give you some examples: Mr. Baird, Madam Scott and also Senator Runciman, who departed not long ago to the federal government. He collected more than \$173,000 in

severance pay, which I think he was right to do, because that's part of our collective agreement with the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

When we speak in this place, I think we have to always speak the truth. We have to point out to the people of Ontario what we are all about. We are here to protect rights.

We owe those people who worked very hard for many years for the public service. I think we owe them severance, since we are the people who terminated their contracts. I know that many people are trying to twist the truth in order to gain a little political position here and there, but the most important thing is that we have to be honest with ourselves. We have to protect the rights of the people of this province and protect the people who work very hard across Ontario to serve us as a people in general.

I listened to the opposition leader speak about many different issues, but he forgot that back when he was a minister in the Mike Harris government, he authorized and agreed to pay thousands and thousands of civil servants \$50 million as severance when they moved from department to department, even though they didn't lose one day of work. So how come it was good back then and it's not good right now? I'm not going to argue that back then it was wrong, because back then it was part of the collective agreement, because they signed an agreement with the government. They continue to sign that agreement. That's why today we have an obligation as a government to honour our agreement, because we had an agreement with the people of this province, with the civil servants. I think we should honour it.

Interjections.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: The member opposite from Oxford, I think, should be honest with himself, too, and support the people who work very hard for him, for me and for all of us in this province. We should respect the workers when they sign an agreement. This agreement should be respected. We don't want to repeat what happened in the NDP government. We're not going to repeat what happened with different elements of our government.

I think our obligation as a government, as elected officials, is to protect the rights of the workers, to protect the rights of the public servants, because they signed an agreement, and the agreement, when it's signed, should be honoured, should be respected and should not be changed under any circumstances. That's what happened.

I think my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre mentioned very important things. If we didn't honour this agreement, we would be subject to suing and it would cost us more money. Also, as a result of combining the two taxes, PST and GST—the HST—we're going to save more than \$100 million a year for the taxpayers, which is going to go back to health care, education and infrastructure.

We're doing the right things for the people of the province of Ontario. I hope the members opposite stand up in their places and support our move and our

directions in order to restore the freedom and rights for the people of the province of Ontario.

Again, I want to tell you and I want to tell all my people from London–Fanshawe that I'm going to vote against this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much.

Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day motion number

1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask all members to take their seats.

Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 1. All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Hardeman, Ernie

Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
MacLeod, Lisa
Miller, Norm

Murdoch, Bill
Savoline, Joyce
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Carroll, Aileen
Chiarelli, Bob
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Duguid, Brad

Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kormos, Peter
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Murray, Glen R.

Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sorbara, Greg
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 18; the nays are 45.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1805.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
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Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Granum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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